Cecilie Andersson

Migrant Positioning

In Transforming Urban Ambience
Urban Villages and the City, Guangzhou, China

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor

Trondheim, August 2012

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Architecture and Fine Art
Department of Urban Design and Planning

NTNU – Trondheim
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

House 1, House Rent Project, Author`s photograph 2008

MIGRANT POSITIONING

**in transforming urban ambience
Urban villages and the city, Guangzhou, China.**

I   ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

II   TABLE OF CONTENTS

III   LIST OF FIGURES   page

IV   SUMMARY

This research looks into the Chinese rural-urban migrants' agency and situatedness in relation to urban villages, the city, home and belonging, with a focus on migrant positioning within the transforming urban ambience.

I question what roles the urban villages have in situating the migrants in the urban realm and how the migrants position themselves in regard to spatial practice, home and belonging.

The research applies a migrant perspective as an alternative reading on the urban villages' role in the city and the migrants' sites of belonging. I build on studies on spatial practice in and around several urban villages and findings from the initiated interactive co-research with migrants in the long-term *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, collecting visual, oral and written impressions that view and reflect the changes in the everyday perceptions of being a migrant in the city.

I challenge the dominant discourse stating that Chinese migrants are either depicted as 'on the move' or 'placed' in the peri-urban areas, and in this sense can be seen as either 'displaced' or 'emplaced'. By applying a translocal perspective, I propose to broaden the discussion in relation to how the urban village and the city is interpreted and how their borders are negotiated by the migrants themselves on broader multi-scalar premises, including the urban neighborhood, the whole city, their hometown and beyond.

I discuss how the Documentation Project participants' own narratives emphasize a temporal and transitional attachment to a dwelling and a neighborhood in the urban village, while they persist on a more lasting urban ambition for a belonging that can be perceived as multi-scalar. They relate not only to the urban village but to the overall city in order to reshape themselves as modern urban subjects.

With their move away from their hometown they have come to redefine 'home'. While home was previously based on both a location and a family staying together, many of the migrants interviewed for this research have expressed how after their move they emphasize the importance of family bonds across borders rather than a place to call home. With this alteration, they handle the uncertainty and instability of life in the city by abolishing the traditional concept of 'home'. Perceiving as a multi-scalar belonging

that captures broader elements, both regarding time and space, this means in some situations they can relate to a more dynamic and flexible structure of 'home' and belonging, while for other situations this creates a new type of vulnerability as a more 'subjective home' makes more individual demands without providing the security of the former.

Overall structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part contains the first two chapters, *Introduction* and *Context,* and describes the circumstances with emphasis on the policy influence and physical conditions of the built environment. The second part contains the next four chapters; *Theory, Method, Cases* and *Discussion*. There is no separate analysis chapter but the entire second section should be read as an ongoing analysis as it investigates the situation with emphasis on terms, spatial practice and positioning.

The concrete spaces and places that I have studied throughout this research will be presented in the *Context* chapter and further addressed in the *Cases* chapter. The subjective migrant stories I have collected will be presented in the *Cases* chapter and further contextualized in the *Discussion* chapter.

The *Introduction* chapter (Chapter 1) discusses the household registration legislation, Chinese rural-urban migration situation and the urban village phenomenon. These three issues ground the topic to policy and discourse. Definitions and preferences for use of terms are also confirmed here. Furthermore, I present how the household registration legislation or '*hukou'* system is a major provider of spatially differentiated conditions, and a deliverer of causes for the rural population to reason their move to the cities.

I hold that while we witnessed the urban villages emerging along with the first big wave of rural-urban migration, the urban villages are now under immense pressure to disappear while the rural-urban migration continues. Increased urbanization is seen by the authorities as a desired strategy to continue the economic growth. It is crucial in this situation to know what role the urban villages have played and are playing for the migrant residents of the city and for the overall urbanization process in China.

The *Context* chapter (Chapter 2) describes the conditions of spatial practice related to land use and urban transformation in the Pearl River Delta, with a focus on the city of Guangzhou and a further zoom in on Tianhe district, accounting for recent urban developments in the Central Business District and the area's urban villages.

The broader context is described in terms of fluidity and emphasizes aspects of transformation. The focus on Tianhe district is used to build up to the account of the situation in Xian Cun, the urban village of my main inquiries, which was used for spatial observations as well as being the site of most interviews conducted.

The built projects I account for, fences, buildings, infrastructure and campuses, were selected because their location, position and use represent the urban ambitions exposed in the urban transformation in Guangzhou. The major events and projects discussed herein are all related to wanted strategies by the authorities controlling the transformation of the urban fabric. These projects and the way they are perceived confront the way urban residents, local villagers and the migrant residents can come to relate to the urban sphere. They represent fixed forms in a city in flux, but when I account for returning visits to the same places, I show how their roles and uses are changing along with the transformation of the city. This point is further elaborated in the *Cases* chapter.

The second part of the thesis starts with **the *Theory* chapter** (Chapter 3) to introduce the terms I use and the ideas I build my argument on. The writings I build upon are concerned with communication, and the nature of subjectivity and diversity in relation to experiences of space and place.

This chapter is further divided into two sections, one focusing on place at work and the other focusing on the situating of subjects.

In the first section I emphasize place to be conceptualized as open and heterogeneous and as an event, more than an entity (Casey 1998). I address the terms "nomad space" and "smooth/striated space" by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), and continue with "arrival city" by Doug Saunders (2010), "everyday urbanism" by Margaret Crawford (Mehrotra 2005) and "kinetic city" or "elastic urban conditions" by Rahul Mehrotra and include a short brief on "liminal space" by Victor W. Turner (1967).

The second section questions situatedness at work, looking at the dynamics and relations of the subject in place. This part addresses the migrants' subjective positioning as a spatial agency within the Chinese urban realm when going from the simplest relations in the form of interference and disturbance, accounted for by Serres (1980), via a short brief on power and appropriation of space using Zhang Li (2001) and Lefebvre (1974)and

continuing with Sennett (2008) on resistance and ambiguity. Further I build on *practice of* transgression by Pun Ngai (2005), how migrants can be said to be "out of place" and "put in place" with reference to Tamara Jacka (2006), and end the chapter addressing the notion of translocality or multi-scalar locality by Brickell and Datta (2011).

Following this is **the *Method* chapter** (Chapter 4) emphasizing the theory, appropriation and process of the writing and research.

The various approaches I work with and thus describe in this chapter are all within a qualitative domain and were selected to help grasp the complexities in interpretations of the urban ambience and the diversity in migrant perspectives. Also, they are to be seen in relation to the views presented in the theory chapter when addressing an approach, which not only tries to understand the object, but rather can be described as a study of how knowledge is produced, working without a unified core position.

The observation and documentation of shift in use is put forward as one important parameter in the data collection. It is important also as it manages to capture the dynamic parameters in the use of space and emphasizes how the observations made do not represent static forms but dynamic and transforming relations.

I address the format of the monograph, data collecting, forms of interview, language, translation and the challenge of being absent and discuss this in relation to the two long-term data collecting projects, *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*.

The narrative approach accounted for in the narrative voice section is used to strengthen the focus on migrants' own interpretations of the situation. In this section narrative identities are looked at in more detail. The approach deals with data from the photos and accounts of presentations in the *Photo Documentation Project* and the blog diary, the questionnaires and the interviews from the *House Rent Project* discussed in the *Cases* chapter.

The *Cases* chapter (Chapter 5) presents spatial practice in relation to several urban villages with emphasis on Xian Cun.

The chapter starts with a complete interview account with a bicycle guard living and working in Xian Cun to exemplify a way of documenting and analyzing based on the material covering both a subjective story and her reading of the surroundings.

The talks, observations and projects presented in this chapter are organized in relation to place. I start with the core city villages with the observations and talks I have done in Xian Cun. Afterwards I present the results from visits in the urban villages of Liede, Shipai and Tangxia. I then briefly present cases from the rural but gentrified Xiaozhou Cun, the suburban villages Nanting Cun and Beiting Cun and look at the migrant neighborhoods in the central district of Liwan[1]. The chapter ends with an account of Shigangxi Cun and the two adjoining projects, *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, discussing the process and analysis of the narratives.

While Xian Cun is in many ways an urban village that has gone through a typical development from rural village to urban village, proceeding through a period of increasing density and now declining towards total demolition, every urban village takes its own path. I focused on Xian Cun in my research, but to illustrate how the urban villages are transforming differently, I have included a section about other villages in the vicinity of Xian Cun including peri-urban villages to show how other conditions sometimes require other solutions, but just as common, how other conditions eventually lead to the same density or the same total demolition. Xiaozhou Cun could have been an example of a rural village that became an oasis of tranquility in the midst of the expanding city, but it is now constructing as aggressively as other urban villages. The housing development initiative 'New Alley Movement' in Tangxia Cun could have developed into a different form of migrant participating development, but shows few signs of a different degree of concern for community than the regular local village when exploiting their properties.

The material from the *Photo Documentation Project* is put forward as an approach that focuses on the personal meeting with the city, the urban village, with the road ahead and the changed relation to the hometown left behind. It depicts various relations to home, family and belonging. Different from photographers' accounts of migrant reality, I argue how this project is not a collection of singular pictures portraying a group of migrants, but instead contains prolonged stories that follow the shifting lives of individuals told by themselves, and in this respect provides a very different focus from what has until now been exhibited concerning Chinese migrant representation.

I hold that the participants position themselves through their agency and through their reflections. It is therefore interesting to look at how they visualize both their agency and

---

1   Not an urban village. I here look at a street in the old city center with a substantial migrant population awaiting a massive urban transformation.

their reflection in their meeting with the city and with a new relation to belonging.

The *Discussion* chapter (Chapter 6) is the final chapter summing up the analysis and grounding a migrant spatial practice of positioning in the form of agency, negotiating and situatedness in relation to urban villages and the city, but also with a strengthened focus on home and belonging as a continuation of the Cases chapter's discussion of migrant narratives.

I here hold that demolition is not a simple solution to the urban challenge of handling the urban villages. For many migrant residents the urban village is the best choice available when balancing cost, convenience, reciprocity and their grounding of an urban transition. The urban village is an arena where the migrant residents, through their everyday practice and attitude, subvert diverse boundaries, not only that of the urban-rural divide, but equally important that of their own subjective experience of belonging and connecting to various multi-scalar urban spheres, through local-local relations within and beyond the urban village where they reside.

As seen in this chapter, the interviewees express the urban villages to be a pattern of accessible facilities in an extended network all over the city, providing a typology of attachment that in the migrants' concern could be applied to other places and other urban villages. The urban village is constituted as a place through connections to other places further away from the locality of the neighborhood, thus the migrant agency and situatedness can be said to trespass boundaries just as much through their ability to connect and interlink.

I argue that through the methods used in the *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project* carried out as co-research with migrant participants, I have pointed to possibilities in participating processes that must be a starting point when addressing planning that concerns the migrant residents of the urban villages. Furthermore, I emphasize that through their practice, the migrants are challenging the massive temporality of the urban ambience through a multi-local positioning, relating to the urban village, the city and beyond. This understanding of migrant positioning can be a premise for recognizing and negotiating spatial inclusion for the migrants in the city.

0.1 Approaching the city. *Photo Documentation Project*

0.2   Map of China (author`s illustration).

RUSSIA

MONGOLIA

RUSSIA

NORTH
KOREA

SOUTH
KOREA

Beijing ●

CHINA

Shanghai ●

NEPAL

BHUTAN

INDIA

BANGLADESH

BURMA

Guangzhou ●

VIETNAM

LAOS

XXX

0.3 Map of China with provinces (author`s illustration).

大弘扬亚运精神 争创全国文明城市

交通安全记心上

等等红灯

0.6   Map of Guangzhou with districts (author`s illustration).

CONG HUA

HUA DU

ZENG CHENG

BAI YUN

LUO GANG

3

2

5

1

4

6

PAN YU

7

NAN SHA

1   LI WAN
2   YUE XIU
3   TIAN HE
4   HAI ZHU
5   HUANG PU
6   LUO GANG
7   SHIGANGXI CUN
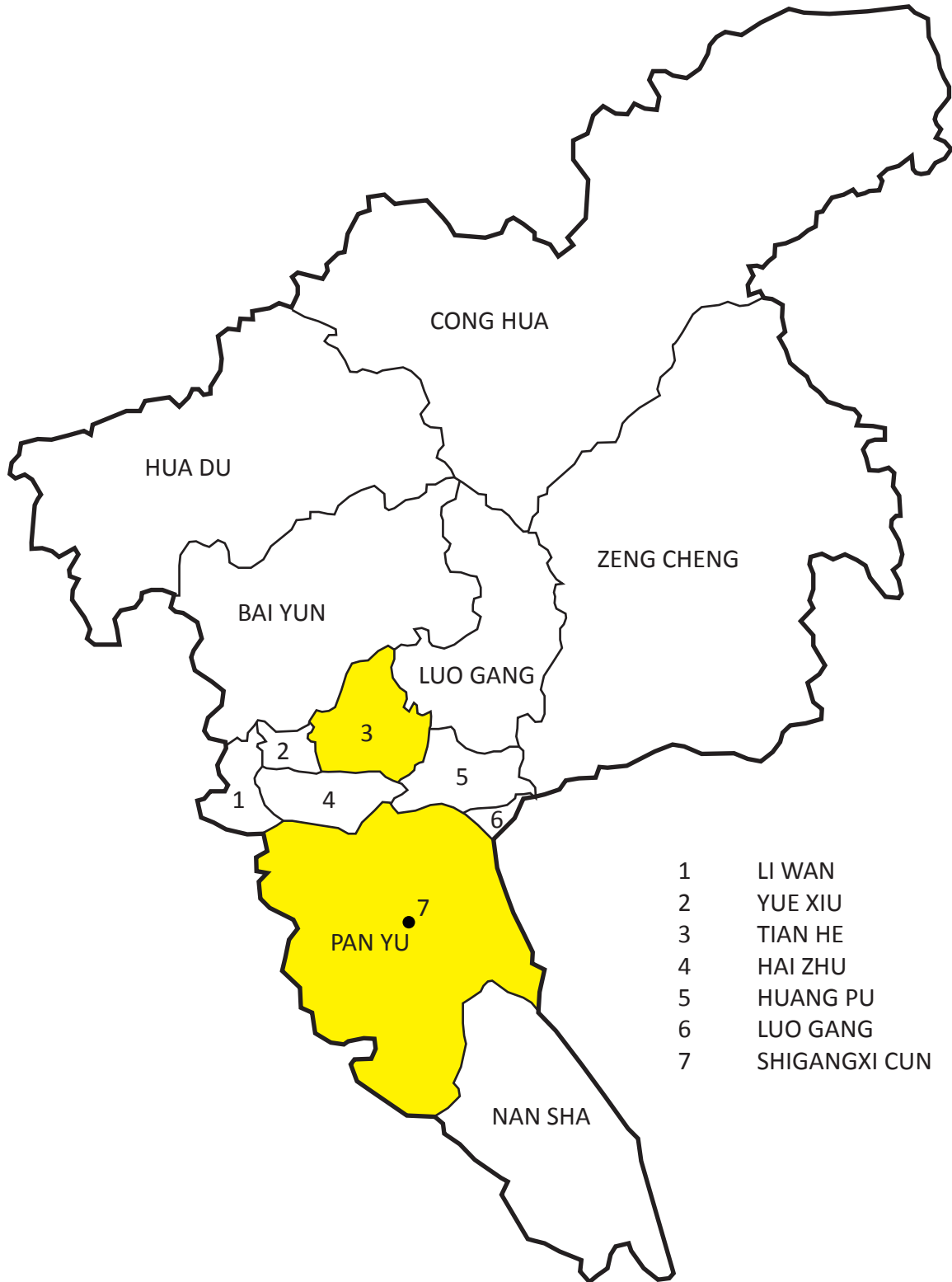
0.7   Map of eight central districts of Guangzhou with urban villages (author`s illustration).

1   XIAN CUN
2   SHIPAI
3   LIEDE
4   XIAO ZHOU CUN
5   BEITING CUN
6   NANTING CUN

0   5 km
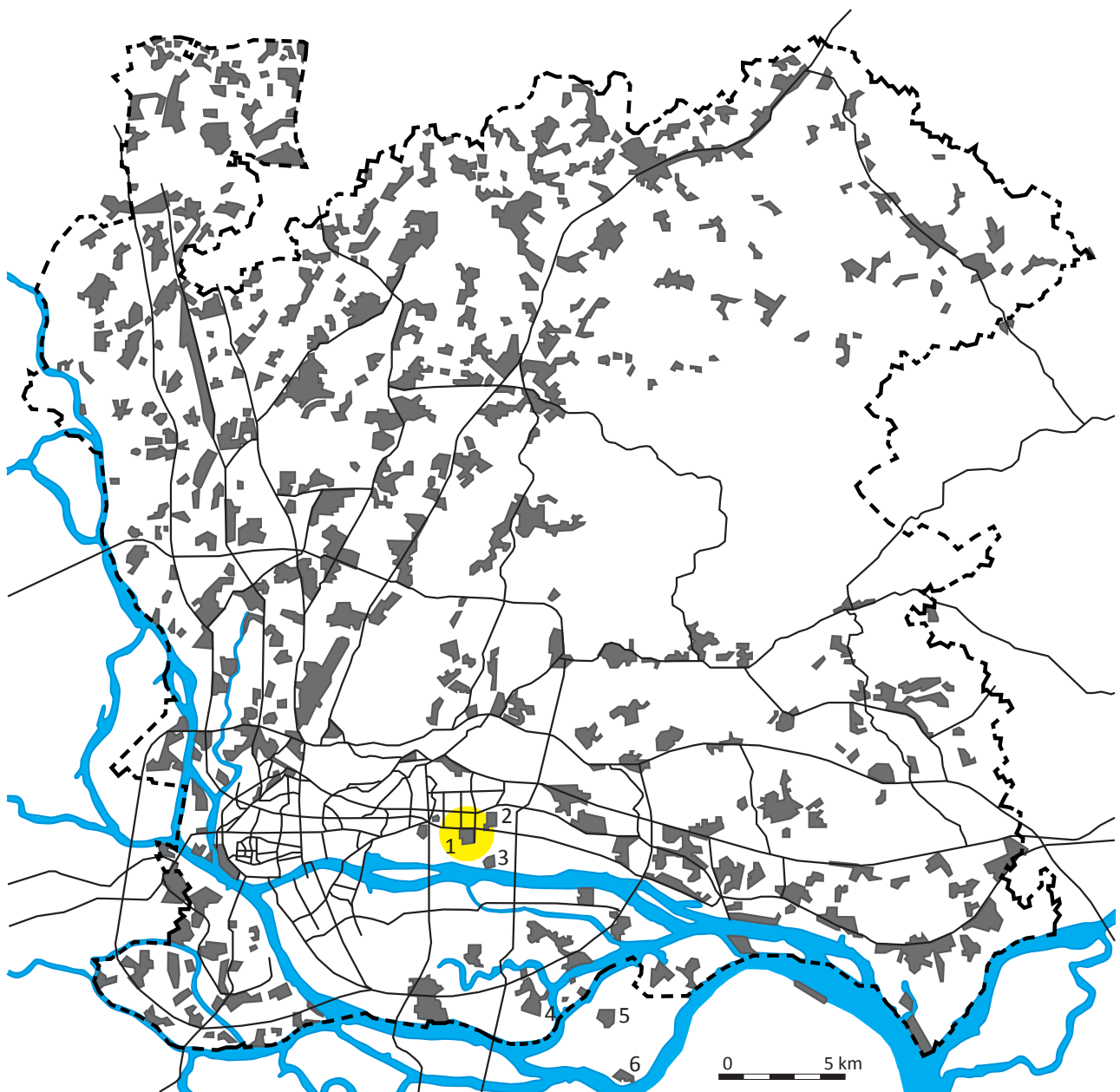
0.8   Xian Cun October 2011. Courtesy of Malte Lech.

0.9   Dwelling. *Photo Documentation Projec*t.

0.10   Recyclers' gloves stored in ancestral temple column, Shigangxi Cun.
        Author's photograph 2006.

MIGRANT POSITIONING

**in transforming urban ambience
Urban villages and the city,
Guangzhou, China.**

"This is a country where transformation means migration"

Francis Rambert (2008): In 'The fascination with the grand scale' preface of the book *In the Chinese City. Perspectives on the Transmutations of an Empire* (Edelmann 2008, p. 13).

VI.1 MIGRANT POSITIONING IN TRANSFORMING URBAN AMBIENCE

This research looks at the migrant positioning in regard to both agency and situatedness in relation to urban villages, the city, home and belonging. Through methods of co-research with migrant participants, this study approaches a migrant perspective addressing subjective relations to spatial practice and sites of belonging.

When the migrant in question is seen as part of a crowd, they are often referred to as the 'floating population', but there is not much about them that is 'floating'. Their disadvantaged position requires them to calculate their move; they are not just drifting anywhere, they have urban ambitions.

The city in question is a city in transformation. It is expanding. Not only in the physical sense, but also in the domain of influence for the mindset tuned for the best of futures to be lived within a harmonious urban development. The residents go to KTV, use the MRT and build another CBD[1]. They have witnessed paddy fields doing urban flips to become a part of the world league of tall towers. All its inhabitants gradually change the way they relate to the city, as it grows and throws off its past. It is changing from within, with the city fabric eradicated and new districts built from scratch. Sixteen-lane highways with crammed traffic, daily rhythms beating in the morning, noon and evening rush hour. To look at the era of ongoing migration is to look at the era of ongoing urban transformation. The backdrop is the last three decades.

The transformation in question is a transformation that shakes both the urban and the rural Chinese landscape. The divide is formalized, but still its borders are intricate and transgressed. The urban ideals influence the countryside. The rural influence is found in the city. The urban-rural confrontation fosters new typologies and the urban village is among the most vigorous. The urban village in question is as urban as the city in regard to population and built fabric. It carries a pluralistic expression. There is nothing rural about this village. It is the densest among urban environments.

---

1   KTV is a karaoke venue; MRT is the metro; CBD is the Central Business District.

While the urban villages take up approximately 20% of the land of the urban area in Guangzhou, they accommodate about 70% of the migrant population, which constitute about 40% of the entire population in the city (Lin *et al.* 2011)[2]. Many migrants, both residing in the urban village and visiting, find their work, networks, social scene and everyday services within the urban village. The urban village grants a large share of the migrants the ability to sustain their basic needs and tend to become migrant neighborhoods. However, today, the urban villages are changing position as part of the overall urban transformation. Many urban villages face an uncertain future regarding reconstruction and demolition.

The urban ambience in question is understood both physically and mentally. It influences every step a rural-urban migrant takes in positioning him/herself in the city, in the urban village and in the overall situated imagining within a rural-urban divide. This is our starting point.

VI.2   ANGLE OF APPROACH

While the urban villages are under constant threat of eradication within the urban development scheme, rural-urban migration pace in China is slowing down even though it will remain prominent for years to come. Therefore, we need to understand the role of the urban villages for the migrants' attachment to the urban sphere. When the migrants can no longer connect to an urban village, how can they then attach to the city?

In this research, I look at the relations between the urban village and the city and the relations between the urban village and the migrant residents, particularly in relation to the question of what role the urban village has in situating the migrants in the urban realm. The answer does not have an all-embracing significance and it therefore requires a broadened focus on attachment that goes beyond the urban village, raising the question of how the migrants position themselves in regard to spatial practice, home and belonging.

While some scholars in their studies of migrants in the city have not engaged in the issue of urban villages and have simply referred to them as migrant enclaves without discussing their impact on migrants' lives, others clearly situate the migrants in the urban villages, but in doing so neglect to take into consideration how migrants themselves negotiate their relationship with the urban sphere through their everyday practice on

---

2   Only migrants staying for more than six months in the city are included in official population estimates.

broader multi-scalar premises, including the urban neighborhood, the whole city, their hometown and beyond.

With a migrant perspective and a focus on agency and a translocal approach to a multi-scalar situatedness or the local-local spatial relations[3] migrants engage in, this research tries to challenge the dominant discourse stating that Chinese migrants are either depicted as 'on the move' or 'placed' in the peri-urban areas, and in that sense can be seen as either 'displaced' or 'emplaced'[4]. To think of the migrant residents as *displaced* or *emplaced* is to accept an understanding of the migrant agencies as passive with categories applied to them by the surroundings. Instead, by focusing on their positioning we can look at the active subjective negotiations towards their surroundings that have been made by the migrants themselves.

I will build on studies in and around the urban village of Xian Cun and findings from co-research with migrants in two long-term projects, *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, where visual, oral and written impressions were collected. These narrative fragments of migrant views on life illustrate aspects of subjective experiences and throw light on how migrants are attached and relate to the urban localized context as well as to show how they continually relate to a broader context of belonging.

VI.3   STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

This dissertation can be read as divided in two parts. The first part describes the situation, and the second part is enquiring readings of the situation. There is no separate analysis chapter, but the second part of the text should be read as including the analysis, through the theory, method, case and final discussion.

The first part contains two chapters. The *Introduction* (Chapter 1) describes the background for the topic with emphasis on the household registration legislation, rural-urban migration and urban villages. The *Context* (Chapter 2) describes the spatial conditions in the Pearl River Delta, with a focus on Guangzhou, and further zooms in on the transformation in Tianhe district, accounting for recent urban development in the urban area and urban villages.

---

3   On translocality and *local-local spatial relations* see the paragraph on 'translocality' in the last part of the Theory chapter (3.2.9).

4   On displacement and emplacement among Chinese migrants see for instance Helen F. Siu 2007*: Grounding displacement. Uncivil urban spaces in post-reform South China,* mentioned further in the last part of the *Introduction* chapter.

The second part starts with the *Theory* (Chapter 3) to introduce the terms I use and the ideas I build my argument on, further divided into two sections, one focusing on place at work and the other focusing on the situating of subjects. Following this is the *Method* (Chapter 4) emphasizing the theory, appropriation and process of the writing and conducting of the narrative approach. The *Cases* chapter (Chapter 5) presents spatial positioning in relation to several urban villages with a focus on Xian Cun. It ends with an account of the *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, looking further at the process and analysis of the narratives. The *Discussion* (Chapter 6) is the final chapter summing up the analysis and grounding a migrant spatial practice of positioning in the form of agency, negotiating and situatedness[5].

---

5   For an extended account on the chapters' content see: IV Summary.

INTRODUCTION

1.0.1 **"From black to white it's a long journey in gray" writes Jiajun in the first sentence posted on her blog in November 2006[1].**

Jiajun moved to the city when she was 18 to work in industry and to experience the 'wonderful life' she had dreamt of after seeing friends and relatives returning to her hometown with gifts and jewelry from the city. Her family origins are in Hunan province in south-central China, but her parents moved to Guangdong province in the 1990s along with millions of other migrants after the market opened up and the temporary permit applications in the city were eased for the rural population. They came to work in the electronic industry in what is now a district within the megacity of Guangzhou. When Jiajun followed in their footsteps it was to share a house with relatives from her hometown in an urban village in the city. There was an aunt sleeping in the living room, another aunt with her husband and child living in a shared bedroom, and an adult male cousin living in the attic. Her parents shared a room while she slept in the open corridor between the bedrooms.

The house they rented was an old farmer's house with a small courtyard with an outhouse. They used to cook in the courtyard, and this was also where the male cousin's motorcycle was be parked. The main room of the house was the living room, which one entered from the courtyard. It was large with a high ceiling and it contained the TV and was the room where the extended family would eat, talk and watch TV. When Jiajun looks back on this time, it is with the memory of a simple yet happy life when the family stayed together.

Jiajun has lived in the same urban village since 2001, but after her father died and her mother moved to another city and found a new family, she moved from rented place to rented place within the old and new parts of the urban village. She is now 28. In the village one third of the population comes from her hometown in Hunan. She is living with her husband and daughter. Her mother just moved in with them again and her brother lives in the same village. She has no reason to think she will ever go back to her hometown in Hunan, but even after ten years in the city she keeps her dearest belongings in a suitcase. When I ask her where she feels at home, she says she has no home. The urban village she lives in is a familiar place, but yet it will always be a strange place to her.

Through my research I have followed Jiajun since 2006. She has taken part in the *Photo Documentation Project*, contributing with pictures of her dwelling and family, and she has taken part in the *House Rent Project*, contributing with her blog-diary and pictures of how she has lived in her rented apartments. Providing this material has been her tenant contribution. Since 2007, she has moved four times. I will come back to her story in the *Cases* and *Discussion* chapters.

---

1   A Chinese proverb. Jiajun has explained that to her it means that life is not straightforward.

1.0.2 ON HUKOU, MIGRANTS AND URBAN VILLAGES

As we witnessed urban villages emerging along with the first big wave of rural-urban migration, we now see that the urban villages are under pressure to disappear while the rural-urban migration continues, and increased urbanization is seen by the authorities as a desired strategy to continue the economic growth. In this situation it is crucial to know what role the urban villages have played and continue to play for the migrant residents of the city and for the overall urbanization process in China. Throughout the last decade more scholarly articles have been released on the urban village phenomenon in China. The majority of articles are written in Chinese, but one can also find English articles with diverse approaches. Many of them focus on the physical fabric, land use patterns, ownership systems and local villagers (Zhao *et al.* 2011, Chan *et al.* 2003), while the dual focus including migrants and the social structures within the urban villages has increased during the last few years (Siu 2007, Song *et al.* 2008, Lin *et al.* 2011, Zhang 2001). However, only now are we seeing the first scholarly books about to be released dedicated to the subject of *migrant villages*[2].

In this chapter I will account for the household registration system (*hukou*), the urban village phenomenon and the migrant population situation. Here I will draw the general picture while in later chapters I will handle the spatial practice of the migrants in their interrelation with the city and its urban villages. The concrete spaces and places that I have studied throughout this research will be addressed in the *Context* chapter and in the *Cases* chapter. The subjective migrant stories I have collected will be addressed in the *Cases* chapter and in the *Discussion* chapter, while some subjective stories are also to be found in the *Methodology* chapter (story of Ms Wang) and in the *Theory* chapter (story of Xiao Meizhou) for contextualization.

---

2   Working title: *Migrant villages in Urban China*. London: Routledge.
Eds.: Fulong Wu, Fangzhu Zhang, and Chris Webster, not yet published as of January 2012.

1.1 HUKOU; PROVIDER OF SPATIALLY DIFFERENTIATED CONDITIONS

As a basis for an understanding of both the urban village phenomenon and the current migrant situation, it is crucial to be aware of the impact of the household registration regulations (*hukou dengji tiaoli*) or '*hukou*' system, both as a major provider of spatially differentiated conditions, and as a deliverer of causes for the rural population to reason their move to the cities. It is also crucial to understand the way the system has been enforced to see how the conditions of the rural-urban migrants have come to be so exploitative and unjust, with rural-urban migrant laborers excluded from the urban welfare and social security systems. This has shaped the biased terms favoring the local villagers and the urban population in the cities and created the discriminatory conditions of the urban villages.

1.1.1 THE HUKOU IN RETROSPECT

In 2008, the household registration regulations had been enforced for 50 years, highlighting its role as an institutional pillar underlying a deep rural-urban gap. On that occasion Kam Wing Chan (2009) released a retrospective analysis, and that is my main source when writing about the hukou system here. The household registration legislation can generally be said to have played two major roles in Chinese policy throughout the last 50 years. The hukou system was first installed to record the urban residents from 1951. From 1955 it was expanded to cover both rural and urban populations. In 1958, a more far-reaching hukou regulation (*Hukou dengji tiaoli)* was established, and this is the form that continues to represents the only national legislation on migration and residence, promulgated by the National People's Congress, China's highest legislative body (Chan 2009). From 1958 onwards, Chinese citizens were no longer entitled to the right to migrate or reside outside their place of origin. This led to China being one of the most stable countries migration-wise in the first two decades of the Mao era (Chan 2009).

While the hukou system in the Mao era created an immobilized peasantry and helped the industrialization program through the move of resources from the agrarian sector to socialist industrialization, the post-Mao era with rural decollectivization created a large surplus of rural labor in the countryside, at the same time as the new export-oriented industry strategy of the '80s started to demand lots of low skilled, low paid workers. To respond to this new situation, new policies to remove obstacles of mobilization were launched. In 1984 the state introduced '*hukou with self-supplied food grain'* in small

towns (Chan and Zhang 1999), which enabled rural-urban migration but without any fiscal responsibility for the state to provide welfare for the migrants. In 1985 a national policy of allowing '*temporary residence*' was effectuated, also including temporary moves to large cities, but again without providing the rights and benefits of the local hukou.

When the food grain rationing ended in 1992 across most of China, it further eased the rural-urban migration.

1.1.2   HUKOU AND THE COMMAND ECONOMY

The hukou system is to be seen in the context of the establishment of the command economy, requiring control of both micro- and macro-society, as well as the industrialization strategy of that time based on the transfer of resources from agriculture to industrialization (Chan 2009).

Yang and Cai (2003) describe a trinity of tools exercised by the Chinese state to enforce the policy of moving resources from agriculture to industrialization, and as a consequence, from the rural sector to the urban sector, in their article on China's political economy of the rural-urban divide:

1   The compulsory procurement and monopoly of sales of farm produce

2   The rural collective (commune) system

3   The hukou system controlling population mobility.

The procurement and monopoly of sales from farm produce was to generate an unequal inter-sector exchange, accumulating capital for industrialization; the two other tools were designed to enforce that exchange. This approach is also known as the '*Big Push Industrialization Approach*'. Although influenced by the Soviet Union's economic and political model, the overall implementation in China was not of a set system put into operation. The hukou system emerged as the administrative measure and central component in restricting the rural to urban migration as a consequence of many peasants beginning to leave the countryside when the procurement and monopoly of sales of farm produce was enacted throughout the '50s. These first migrants of the command economy were called '*mengliu*' or 'blind flow' in the official documents of that time (Chan 2009).

1.1.3   SPATIAL DIFFERENTATION

The administrative hierarchy in China is a system disbursing fiscal resources. For the last 50 years, the hierarchy has consisted of five main levels of government; central,

provincial, prefecture, county, towns and townships. Although the power has devolved in favor of the lower level governments in the post-reform era, the quantity and quality of the state-provided services and welfare has been and continues to be correlated with the hierarchical rank of an area (Chan 2009). Chan and Zhao (2002) argue that the public sector in China redistributes benefits towards locations and population groups that are already the most advantaged. Chen *et al.* (2008) account for three major spatial inequalities in China; *urban-rural*, *inter-urban* and *intra-urban*. Urban-rural inequalities are based on how the rural hukou diminish access to urban resources. Inter-urban spatial inequalities are between the coastal regions and the inner/central/western regions through socialist economic development strategies, but also in the international context. Intra-urban spatial inequalities are between inner urban areas and suburban peripheries and between different work-based neighborhoods. All of these spatial inequalities affect the migrant agency and situatedness. The *inter-urban* inequalities constitute major reasons for internal migration, while the *urban-rural* and *intra-urban* inequalities affect the migrants when in the city.

1.1.4   DUAL HUKOU CLASSIFICATION

The hukou classifications are and were categorized into types and location: either you had an agricultural (*nongye*) or a non-agricultural (*fei nongye*) hukou. This distinction would, and largely still does, clarify the person's status towards the state. It was only the non-agricultural status that entitled a person to state-provided housing, employment, grain rations, education, access to medical care and other benefits (Chan 2009, p. 201). The residential location was the other distinction in this categorization of citizens. Wherever the hukou registration was completed was the only official permanent residence for that person. According to the hukou system, people who move from the place where their hukou is registered to a new place without getting local citizenship are referred to as the *non-hukou population*. They are *de facto* residents, but still not legally accepted residents of the locality where they live. In many ways the hukou system can therefore be seen as applying a practice where China treats its own citizens within the borders of its country similar to that of other countries' practices of 'guest laborers' coming from foreign countries to work without local citizenship.

Together this dual hukou classification system meant one could find agricultural hukou holders in towns and cities as well as non-agricultural populations in rural areas, and this practice created four types of people with the parameters of urban or rural areas and agricultural or non-agricultural hukou.

Major Constituent Groupings of Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Populations by Hukou Status and Location based on: Chan 2009, p. 202 (further modified from Chan and Tsui 1992 and Chan 1994).

Hukou location	Agricultural hukou	Non-agricultural hukou
Urban areas	Rural migrant workers Farm workers Dependents	Urban workers State cadres and professionals Dependents
Rural areas	Rural (industrial) workers[a] Farmers Dependents	State farm workers[b] State cadres and professionals Dependents of above
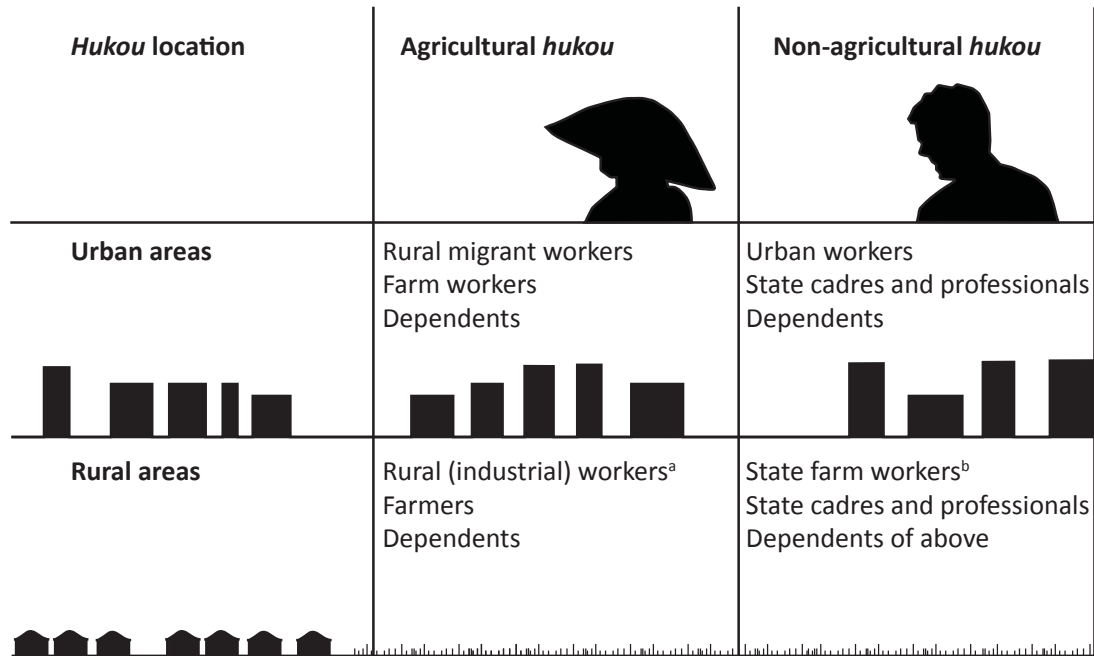
a	In township and village enterprises.
b	In state-run agricultural enterprises.

Eighty-five percent of the population was classified as rural in this system (1955), and according to Chan (2009) this population of non-priority citizens was to be regarded and treated as residual. They were the providers of state-dictated low priced raw materials, food, labor and capital for the industrial sector (Chan 2009, p. 200).

The rural population and production was collectivized and in general excluded from the state-supplied welfare, while the urban industrialization was nationalized and monopolized and enacted in a scheme of state support and protection. In line with the hukou decree, all citizens got classified as either rural or urban and the legislation required that all internal migration should be approved by the authorities at the destination.

The rural hukou laborers provide a super-exploitable and highly mobile and flexible industrial workforce for China's new economy. "Both the governments of Guangdong and Shenzhen have openly acknowledged that without the rural migrant labor, the province and the city could not have achieved the rapid economic growth of the past 30 years" (Chen and Liu 2006, cited in Chan 2009, p. 208). The fact that the province

is China's model of reform, the largest migrant province, and the core of the "world's factory" is a clear indication of the close relationship that exists within migrant labor, the hukou system, and the "world's factory"(Chan 2009, p. 208).

1.1.5   RECENT APPROACH TO THE HUKOU LEGISLATION

The local governments have lately gained more control of the management of their local hukou entry condition criteria. This has enabled them to attract either rich or skilled residents while refusing others. Some places have eased the process of granting local hukou, and in some places such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou they have simplified the process to a one-step procedure (Chan 2009). The local governments also use the urban hukou as an exchange for permanent loss of land for the local agricultural population, as seen in the examples presented from the urban villages. This equalization between property rights and citizenship has been seen by some critics as indirect theft of peasants' property (Chan 2009).

Amnesty International (2007) released a report on the discrimination and abuse of the internal migrants in China pointing to the hukou system as the provider and basis that facilitates and fuels discrimination; some scholars, including Chan, Zhang and Zhao, all describe the hukou system as discriminating.

During the last few years one can see increased domestic pressure against the hukou system as a provider of dual discrimination. In 2010, 12 provincial newspapers in China had a co-signed joint appeal to accelerate the reforms of the hukou system claiming it should be abolished as fast as possible according to *China Daily* (2010-03-02).

Prior to this China's Premier Wen Jiabao said China would advance the reform of its household registration system (*Xinhua* 2010-02-27). A few months earlier, in December 2009, the Central Economic Work Conference released an official statement, pledging to "push for urbanization in an active and steady manner" and to "solve the hukou problem of migrant workers" according to Yao (2009). This initiative was followed by an announcement to implement a study and formulate a new policy by the National Development and Reform Commission (Yao 2009).

The reasons for the central authorities to force reform or ease the hukou system do not appear to be grounded in a profound belief in a more just policy. Rather, although the critique of the system has been expressed for a long time, according to Yao (2009) urbanization has been put forward as one of the structural adjustments that will

spark the domestic consumption to answer the financial crisis of 2008 with a reduced reliance on exports. An "average urban resident consumes 1.6 times more than his rural counterpart" according to Yao (2009) who further holds that urbanization requires more services and infrastructure and an increased share of urban residents would therefore increase the domestic investment.

1.2 CHINESE RURAL-URBAN MIGRANTS

The Chinese rural population seeking work in urban centers in the last part of the twentieth century and first part of the twenty-first century make up "the biggest peacetime wave of internal migration ever seen in the world" (Jacka 2006).

According to the *State of China's Cities Report* from 2010, the floating population has increased from six million in 1979 to 211 million in 2009. It is expected to continue to rise, although at a slower pace, dropping to three million a year from the current six million a year, until 2050, when China will have reached a floating population of 350 million. These estimates are found in the recent *2010 Report on China's Migrant Population Development*[3], prepared by the State Population and Family Planning Commission. This report is the first of its kind to be published in China, but they are now mandated to continue this with yearly reports. This indicates that the issue has reached proportions where follow-up is seen as necessary on a national level. The numbers of current migrants and future growth estimates in this report indicate a scale and scope of Chinese migration previously not communicated by officials in China. It is no longer sufficient to look at it as a temporary phenomenon; it is obviously a tendency with long-term effects on the rural-urban settlement balance.

1.2.1 DEFINITIONS AND DISCUSSIONS ON MIGRANTS, FLOATERS AND RURAL WORKERS

UNESCO hosts a migration glossary where a migrant is defined as "any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country"[4]. The UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants defines a **migrant worker** as a *"person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a*

---

3 The *2010 Report on China's Migrant Population* Development is written in Chinese, so I use the *State of China's Cities report* (2010) as my second-hand source.

4 Definitions from UNESCO's Glossary on Migration, please use the following URL: www.unesco.org/shs/migration/glossary

national". They further state that a person can be considered a migrant even when s/he is born in the country as long as it is a crossing of boundaries of a political or administrative unit. For the rural Chinese population, moving to the cities means they can be regarded as migrants due to the household registration system and its additional spatially differentiated conditions.

The Chinese migrant population is not regarded as 'Internally Displaced Persons' as their move is optional and a choice made by the migrants themselves rather than one that is enforced upon them in a direct manner. In *The State of China's Cities* report (2010) they use two partly overlapping terms for the Chinese migrant population, 'floating population', and 'rural migrant workers'.

Floating population being; "those people who leave the place where their residence is registered or who leave the place of their domiciles in the legal sense and seek jobs or make a living elsewhere" (State of China's Cities 2010, p. 20).

Rural migrant workers being; *"*contract-based rural migrant workers … regarded as a new labor force emerging in China's economic reform and opening up to the world and the process of urbanization. Rural migrant workers are still registered as residents in the countryside" *(*State of China's Cities 2010, p. 21).

'Floating population' or '*liudong renkou'* is a term often criticized by researchers and the media for being a preloaded term with negative connotations in the present public use in China, indicating a roam, a wave, a flood, connoting uncontrollable and devastating natural forces and in being a problematic concept of chaos (Kochan 2009). It refers to an uncontrolled, unstable, temporary character, drifting from place to place. It does, however, describe a state of being that for some migrants can be seen as a valid characterization of their situation. *'Floating population'* can be associated with the term 'blind flow' or *'Mang liu'*. This is a Chinese term that has been used on unrestricted and uncontrolled migration since 1958[5], as earlier mentioned in the hukou paragraph. Zhang (2001) associates this term with the *deterritorialization* that the migrants meet in the Chinese cities and the ambivalence with which they encounter in regards to the achievements of economic reform. They were seen to threaten the economic reform with their rural appearance. While the floating population was a very common term used in Chinese media in the '90s it has been replaced by many other terms throughout

---

5   According to the book*; A Glossary of Political Terms of the People's Republic of China*. Hong Kong: China University Press. 1995. Compiled by Kwok-sing Li. Page 263

10

the years as the representation of migrants in general and in the dominant discourse has been challenged by research, media and policy formulations shifting to a more migrant-oriented narrative by demonstrating the complexity of the situation and re-examining the migrants' place in society according to Kochan (2009). This can be seen within films, books and other narrative voices. I will come back to some examples throughout the text.

In the book *Made in China,* Pun Ngai (2005) addresses the following terms of different groups of workers, most of them migrants. She uses *dagongmei* throughout the book on her study of migrant female factory workers.

DAGONG:	Working for the boss (no longer for the state), imbued with an awareness of labor exploitation and class consciousness
DAGONGMEI:	Working girl
DAGONGZAI:	Working boy
MINGONG:	Peasant worker
GONGREN:	Proletariat, literally working for the state, which had popular usage in Mao's period and denoted a privileged class out of reach of the Chinese peasantry
LINSHI ZHIGONG	Temporary workers and staff members (in a factory). After 1988 they were given temporary yearly contracts
SANWU RENSHI	"Three without persons", persons with no identity card, no temporary residence certificate and no temporary labor handbook (targets of arrest)
MANGLIU	Migrants of 'blind flows'
XIANGXIAMEI	Village girl
WAISHENG REN	Provincial outsiders

Diana Fu (2009) looks at the activity of *Dagongmei's Home*, a Beijing-based organization which works to "authorize and legitimize the speech" of young female migrant workers in conferences and seminars. Diana Fu claims that *the Home* in a way produces and articulates the semi-fixed identity and voices of the *dagongmei*. The dagongmei subject is shaped to challenge the dominant narrative as negative media portrayals, while redefining their identity as '*nü qiangren'* or 'strong woman'. This disciplining of the members to speak only as dagongmei and not as individuals with subjective experiences can be seen as part of shaping the dagongmei according to "the state discourse of economic reform, which asks laborers to 'sacrifice' for economic development and modernization" (Fu 2009, p. 556).

Further in the text, Fu (2009) describes how the 'Dagongmei Magazine' was renamed '*Lanling*'. The term *Lanling* represents the ideal of the strong women that turned into blue-collar consumers, a new force in China's urbanization and modernization. Fu argues that "…in the case of *Lanling*, group consciousness is not evoked for purposes of collective resistance to exploitation but rather to complete the incorporation of migrant women into the capitalist system" (Fu 2009, p. 544).

Fu (2009) also defines the many names for the migrant workers as follows, some of which are the same as those referred to by Pun Ngai, while others differ:

DAGONGMEI	Working girl, a woman, a worker, a city resident without a hukou, and a village migrant (Fu 2009, p. 537)
	Dagong means working for the boss/selling labor, mei is little sister; single and younger/lower status (ibid, p. 537)
LANLING	Bluebell, representing blue-collar
DAGONGDE	Workers
WAIDIREN	Outsiders
CONG NONCUN LAIDE	Coming from the countryside
WAILAIMEI	Sisters from the outside, a term used by China Central Television (CCTV) in 1991 (ibid, p. 540)
XIN SHIMIN	New city residents
XIN GONGREN	New workers
LAOGONG	Laborers
BAOMU	Domestic workers

As seen here many of the terms used on the migrant residents in China contain implicit or explicit ideas of an oppressive status. These terms are used to identify people by others, and they are often terms that one would feel uneasy using face to face with the persons in question, and terms that in a fixed and static way trap the person in question in an inescapable class status.

The migrant workers I collaborated with in the *Photo Documentation Project* usually call themselves and each other '*Gongyou*'. *Gongyou* is used as a polite and friendly way to address a coworker, meaning 'workmate'. This term indicates equality among the people who use this form of address with each other, a way to say, we are in the same boat.

Pun Ngai (2005) argues how the migrant workers are doubly displaced by class, first by

the Chinese state party, when Deng Xiaoping announced death on class by replacing a modernity discourse with a promise to allow "a portion of people to get rich first" and second by the market. "Restructuring class structures and relationships is a contemporary project for capital and the newly emerged elites in Chinese society. And yet the subsumption of class analysis in order to hide class positions and social privileges is their political strategy" (Pun 2005, p. 11).

I would argue that both 'floating population' and 'migrant worker' are terms used within the discourse of placing the migrants in a hierarchy of class and giving them the status of the wild card in the modernization project. I think both these terms indicate temporality; either one shows them as a group of persons just dropping by (floating), or as a group of seasonal laborers leaving when the work is done. I question why the *UN Habitat report on China's Cities* (2010) operates with these terms. I can see the point in Chinese officials using these terms for political reasons, but I cannot see on what premises an international institution like the UN Habitat should agree to use these terms for the Chinese context. I prefer the English terms 'migrants' or 'rural-urban migrants' as most of the persons in question are not 'drifting', as the floating population term indicates. Their move is dependent on family and kinship relations, and thus their migrating is acting counter to the 'blind flow' (Pun 2005). As the rural areas are to a large extent neglected by the state in its modernization project, with exploitation of resources, and attention and awareness all loading the urban realm in favor of the declining development of the countryside (Chan 2009, Pun 2005), it is not just 'work' that attracts the migrants when they decide to move to the cities. They come to join the modern image of Chinese society; they come with optimism for the urban future. They are not just cut-rate muscle for the urban exploitation but individuals with urban ambitions that come to live in the city because being in the city is "the only dream left to dream" (Pun 2005). Even if the migrants lose their job in the city, they will not necessarily travel back to the countryside, but will often try to find a way to survive in the city regardless of how long this takes. They are therefore not migrants purely for the sake of 'working' as the term 'migrant worker' indicates.

In this text I have used either 'migrant' or 'rural-urban migrant' as I find these terms to be less focused on ideology, policy and class[6]. I think they function better at communicating that the persons in question have a status (migrant) that is recognizable beyond China. Once the conditions for the persons moving from the countryside to the city in China

---

6   I use other terms aside from 'migrant' or 'rural-urban migrant' only when referring to sources that use alternative words.

are accounted for, the use of these terms will also communicate how a system like the Chinese hukou system creates migrants/outsiders among their own population and within their own country. As the last few decades have shown, the 'wave' of migrants moving from the countryside to the city is not a constant drifting to-and-fro. Some migrant individuals move back to the countryside of course, but as a principal tendency it is mainly a one-way move building up to increased urbanization. Lu and Wang (2006) estimate that rural-urban migration accounted for 79% of China's urban growth from 1979 to 2003 according to Fan (2008)[7].

1.2.2 MIGRANT NUMBERS

According to the 2011 population census (NBSC 2011), on November 1st 2010 China had 49.7% urban residents and 50.3 % rural residents. The urban ratio has increased in proportion to the rural population since the 2000 census as the proportion of urban residents rose by 13.5%. 261.4 million people lived in places other than their household registration (hukou), although within this figure close to 40 million were persons with current residence different from the place of their household registration, but still living in the same city. Consequently, this means that 221.4 million people fell into the migrant category. Compared with the 2000 census the category of people living in places other than their household registration has increased dramatically and is up by 81.0%. From this we can see that the trend is clear both in respect of a growing urban population and a growing migrant population.

Guangzhou officially has seven million migrant residents with a non-local hukou as of 2011 (Li 2011). The majority lives in the urban villages. Lin *et al.* (2011) state that 70% of the migrants reside in the urban villages and account for close to five million migrant residents within the urban villages of the city (similar to Norway's entire population estimate of 2011). As only migrants who have resided for more than six months in the city are included in the official figures, the number of migrant residents in the urban villages is no doubt higher in reality. Within Guangzhou's Tianhe district alone, there were more than 600,000 migrant residents in 2005[8].

---

7   Fan 2008 referring to Lu, Xianghu and Yonggang Wang (2006). 'Zhonguo "xiang-cheng" renkou qianyi guimo de cesuan yu fenxi (1979-2003)' (Estimation and analysis on Chinese rural-urban migration size). *Xibei Renkou (Northwest Population)*, no. 1: 14-16.
8   According to *Tianhe District Document Department Annual Report* for 2005.

1.2.3   OSCILLATION, MOBILITY, MIGRATING

Even though the main tendency is that the migrants stay in the city, the move to the cities is a back and forth oscillation of individuals. Some move for short stays between the harvests, some stay away from the village for years but then return to their hometown. This is the migration transition. When factors of politics and economics drive the migrants back to the villages, however, they bring with them the knowledge of urban life, networks and attachments to the city. This is a "…reciprocal, dialectic movement that urbanizes the village as much as it revitalizes the city" (Saunders 2010, p. 39). This is exemplified in the *Photo Documentation Story* of Mr Wang in the *Theory* chapter.

In the *Cases* chapter I will account for the urban village of Xian Cun. The average stay for a migrant in this urban village was approximately six months[9], and the flow of people moving in and out was continuous and massive in this village of about 40,000 temporary migrant residents as of 2005. Apart from the temporary migrant population, the village hosted a small share of local villagers, tracing their lineage in the village for centuries, as well as a few thousand self-employed and settled migrants staying in the village for more than a decade. In the following chapters there will be stories reflecting these three groups and their relation to the village, the city and each other.

1.2.4   CHAIN MIGRATION AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The majority of migrants find their first jobs through relatives and friends. According to Lin *et al.* (2011) it is estimated that around 75% of the migrants use social relationships to get the first job in the city. As a result, there are interesting correlations between specific locations, different occupations and specific social networks. At the village level, I saw how in Shigangxi Cun one-third of the residents originate from the same area in Hunan province. On the neighborhood level, Lin *et al.* (2011) describe how many taxi drivers in Guangzhou are from Hunan or Henan Province, and due to their relatively high salary they tend to live in the newer parts of the urban villages. The chain migration thus shapes the social ambience within specific neighborhoods of the city and urban villages. Furthermore, once established in the city the migrants depend on kinship and social relationships because of their vulnerable position as their rural hukou deprives them of public social security when in the city. "The employment of rural migrants is typically informal and unstable, as employers often use short-term contracts to limit their responsibility for welfare provision" (Liu *et al.* 2008, cited in Lin *et al.* 2011, p. 9). As a consequence of this poor integration into the formal labor market the migrants need

---

9   According to Tianhe District, Xian Cun Street renting house management service center representative; 2008

to rely on reciprocity and social relationships according to Lin *et al.* (2011).

1.2.5 MIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS

Although there should be no doubt that the Chinese rural-urban migrants are an ambiguous multiplicity, as a group they do provide certain characteristics. The majority are young people leaving the countryside to work in the cities. Chan (2001) describes how the individuals in the rural migrant labor category are generally younger and more educated than the population they leave behind in the countryside. Pun (2005) stresses the term *dagongmei* (working girls) as the migrants working on the factory shop floor are young females. The word 'girl' corresponds better with reality than 'woman'. The girls working in the factories are often between 15 and 24 years, with the average age around 20 (Pun 2005).

In some industries they will need nimble fingers and there will be a predominance of young female migrants. Such tendencies can be found in relation to singular businesses, but also on bigger scales, in cities such as Shenzhen and in the entire Guangdong Province as a whole, displaying a male-female ratio with a female surplus (Pun 2005). For the massive urban transformation there is a great demand for heavy manual labor that is predominantly carried out by men inhabiting barracks in the construction sites or dwellings in nearby urban villages.

The young are the most attractive workers for the factories, and often workers are laid off or feel burnt-out in their twenties after an intense period of exploitable work (Ngai 2005). The young are also the ones who migrate because they feel freer and feel the social pressure to strive for modernity or want to flee the authority of the patriarchal traditions (Pun 2005). Also, it is often the ones with the most to gain from a life in the city and the ones with the biggest responsibility for the livelihood of the family who tend to leave. Many breadwinners will leave their family in the countryside and work in the city to send back money, but also many young girls use the transitory period of their life between childhood and marriage to find a job in the city (Pun 2005).

1.2.6 MIGRANT FAMILIES AND MIGRANT CHILDREN

In 2002, only seven percent of China's rural-urban migrants were able to bring their families with them to the city (Saunders 2010). However, since the migrant population is young, they account for many births. In 2005 almost a quarter of the births in Guangdong province, or 250,000 children, were born by the 'floating population' (*Chinaview* 2008). Few of them can keep the children in the city as the cost of raising them outside of their

local hukou area is too high compared to their income.

Migrant children without an urban hukou are generally not able to access local public subsidized schools. In some cases they can attend the local schools, but only if they are willing and able to pay surplus charges compared to that of urban residents. Many migrants travel to their hometown to give birth and then leave their children with their grandparents while they return to the city to work. Many also send their children back to their hometown once they are due to start school to save the expenses. In an urban village like Xian Cun, with a total population of more than 50,000 residents, there was only one school and one small kindergarten, both made for the local residents. Most of the migrant children in the village would take the bus daily to an urban village outside the city center where they could pay to attend a cheaper migrant school. According to Lin *et al.* (2011) as of 2008, 70% or around 300,000 migrant children of school age were attending migrant schools in the city of Guangzhou. There were 150 licensed private migrant schools but also several unlicensed schools providing teaching for migrant children in the city. To keep costs down these schools tend to rent cheap places in or around the urban villages, and some of them lack sufficient space for activities or do not have qualified teachers (Lin *et al.* 2011). While the local urban government does not provide schools for migrants, they do require official certification of the migrant schools, and if they do not meet the quality requirements or regulations for security they are shut down by the local government, resulting in the children being even worse off. The alternatives to expensive good quality schools are either cheaper sub-standard migrant schools in the city or sending the children back to their hometowns to go to their local school. Researchers argue however that the "… children left behind in their hometowns are even worse off in terms of educational outcomes as a result of their parents' absence," (Lin *et al.* 2011, p. 9, citing studies by Du and Bai, 1997 and Tan *et al.* 2000).

Jiajun, mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, let her daughter attend kindergarten, which cost her 700 CNY per month, but did not include 'classes' as she could not afford that option. When her daughter is due to start school a year from now she will most likely choose to pay 3000 CNY per semester for a migrant school, as she cannot afford the enrollment fee of 10,000 CNY which migrants need to pay to attend the local village school. Her husband has a monthly salary of 1000 CNY, while the average migrant salary in the area is around 800 CNY per month. Many migrant workers have a monthly salary that equals the costs of a kindergarten or school fee in the city. It is therefore not a free choice when most families leave their children in the hometown. For Jiajun and her

family it is not an option to send the child to the hometown, as the grandparents who would usually take care of the children already live in the city.

1.3 URBAN VILLAGE

> "The enclaves are not a feature of the past but part of China's post-reform modernity when ordinary villagers attached to an entrenched socialist order are forced to come to terms with market insecurities and fragments of their own historical baggage. In the process of administrative restructuring, boundaries are remade, enclosures reinforced, new impositions contested, and new opportunities pursued with desperation and ambivalence." (Siu 2007, p. 345)

1.3.1 DEFINITIONS OF THE VILLAGE-IN-THE-CITY PHENOMENON

According to Him Chung (2010) the definitions of the Chinese village-in-the-city phenomenon are vague. It has been interpreted in various ways and is now a term of ambiguous character as it often includes urban typologies that dilute its concept. To get closer to a more precise understanding of the specific meaning of '*Chengzhongcun*' or 'village-in-the-city' (VIC), Chung (2010) proposes it is useful to look at the difference in perception to that of the Western term 'urban village' and the migrant enclaves such as Zhejiangcun in Beijing for instance.

In the English speaking literature, Chung (2010) claims that writers too easily adopt the term 'urban village' to describe the phenomenon of village-in-the-city in China without distinguishing it from the Western concept of the term. This is perhaps true, but personally I think for non-Chinese writers who do not make this distinction clear, it is not because they associate the Western term with the Chinese concept, because the contextualization of the two terms is obviously different. Urban villages as a planning perspective in the West are used to describe an approach with ideals from Jane Jacobs (1961) and Tailor (1973). Since then it has been conceptualized by figures in the urban development discussion associated with the New Urbanism approach, promoting the development of new settlements that resemble qualities of traditional villages when building in an urban context to escape the alienation of contemporary cities. While this type of urban village is a morphological strategy that urban planners have actively used as a development model, as a means to create a more humane and environmentally sustainable neighborhood with a focus on the sense of place and community, the village-in-the-city in China is marked by other characteristics, and cannot be said to be a result of wanted or planned strategies of community building.

In this respect, the way English speaking writers use the term 'urban village' when referring to the Chinese phenomenon is more related to the use of the term when addressing the urban village phenomenon in India, but through the focus on context it is conceptually distinguished from both the urban village phenomenon in the West and in India.

If the migrant enclaves such as Zhejiangcun and Xinjiang Cun in Beijing are to be included in the village-in-the-city perception, Chung (2010, p. 422) claims one then overlook the social structure of the village-in-the-city when acknowledging that villages-in-the-cities are agglomerations of migrant populations, without taking into account the history or social characteristics. Chung (2010) names three parameters that are then missed out; the social and economic dominance by local villagers, the heterogeneous nature of migrants and the weak community ties among the residents of the settlement.

The Zhejiang village phenomenon is unlike the village-in-the-city, as it is not built up of *ad hoc* constructions by local villagers exploiting their use rights to the maximum on each plot separately, but rather developed by migrant groups building single-story houses making up compounds or big yards or '*da yuan*'. In her book on Zhejiang village, Zhang (2001) describes how one single compound could house as many as 700 households or 6,000 residents (Zhang 2001, p. 75). In Zhejiang village, unlike in a village-in-the-city, the migrants have gained economic and social dominance of the enclave in favor of the local residents through an attainment of land use rights (Zhang 2001). Most migrants living in Zhejiang village are employed by the manufacturers located in the village, and this is also different from the village-in-the-city where most migrants who reside within the village will find jobs outside the village.

1.3.2 PERSONAL REASONS FOR USING THE TERM 'URBAN VILLAGE'

When I use the term 'urban village' I do not draw on the Western notion by the Urban Village Group but use it as an equivalent to the Chinese '*chengzhongcun*' as described by Liu *et al.* (2010). In their article, Liu *et al.* (2010, pp. 135-136) use the term 'urban village' equally with chengzhongcun, and they define it as:

-developed from rural settlements

-becoming transitional neighborhoods under rapid urbanization

-for villagers that have lost their farmland but kept the property rights of their houses and user rights of their housing plots

-where local villagers redevelop their housing to rent out to mainly migrant workers

-development emerged without planning and stimulated by rental income

-built on individual villager households initiatives.

For me the two terms 'urban village' and 'village-in-the-city' equally place the 'village' in the urban sphere. Both of them include a contradiction. None of the terms reveals how the village came to be engulfed by the city or mentions the policy that prevents it from being integrated into the urban scene once it is surrounded by the city; with both terms this urban-rural duality is apparent. Since the appearance of these villages are very different whether they are situated in the core areas of the city or on the urban fringe, I think the term 'urban' is a better characteristic of the location than the term 'in-the-city', as this vaguely indicates a location in the midst of the urban sphere and does not clearly include the fringe villages.

1.3.3   THREE CATEGORIES OF URBAN VILLAGES

Chung (2010) refers to the Professor of Geography at Zhongshan University, Li Lixuan, writing that the overall concept of the village-in-the-city in Guangzhou is only a generalization as it obviously contains very different types of villages. He proposes to divide the villages into three categories; the villages in the city core that have completely lost their farmland; villages in suburban areas retaining a certain amount of farmland; and villages on the city outskirts that still retain a large amount of farmland. In this research, I will mainly focus on the core city villages (Xian Cun and Shipai) and the suburban villages (Shigangxi Cun and Nanting Cun). Li calculated in 2001 that among the 139 urban villages in Guangzhou, there were about 45 core city villages where only the residential part of the village remained (Li 2001). Several of them have since either been demolished or are in the process of demolition, while some of the suburban villages have been located in areas that have changed character. In the *Cases* chapter I will account for Shigangxi Cun in Panyu, an urban village formerly located in a peri-urban area attracting migrant residents because of the nearby electronic industry park and now the area is established as the district's new business area and the village residents are in walking distance from the metro line. Some of my interviewees have expressed how this shift has led to increased rent in Shigangxi Cun and it has forced them to move to villages further away from the city center to find cheaper accommodation.

1.3.4 DENSITY

The urban villages in the new financial district in Guangzhou have a building density of 70% and a floor ratio of five or more according to Lin *et al.* (2011, p. 5). Surveys done by Yanliu Lin in Shipai show how a typical house measuring eight by ten meters, divided in

four units on each of its six floors typically houses 50 people. Chung (2010) refers to a Chinese article by Lan and Hu (2006)[10] where they calculate that in Shipai, 3,000 houses have been built within 0.73km^2, housing over 50,000 people.

The population density and residence composition in different types of villages correspond with the type of urban village. According to Liu *et al.* (2010, p. 140) the number of migrants in inner city villages exceeds the local villagers by three to six times while the peri-urban villages have a migrant population two to three times that of local residents. In inner city villages this results in a population density exceeding 6,000 people/km^2, while the population in peri-urban villages is mostly below 5,000 people/km^2 (Liu *et al.* 2010, p. 140).

Liu *et al.* (2010, p. 142) describe how the housing units in urban villages are generally smaller than the housing units in a Chinese city at 22.6 m^2 and 26.1 m^2 per capita respectively (NBSC 2006). In the inner city villages each individual has less housing space than in the peri-urban areas. Urban villagers have housing space per capita exceeding the housing space of migrant residents of the same villages at 43.58m^2 and 14.56m^2 respectively, all according to Liu *et al.* (2010, p. 142). As this area of living space per capita for rural migrant households is an average number for all types of urban villages one can estimate that the average housing space per capita for migrants in inner city villages is even smaller. In Yanliu Lin's example from Shipai referred to above, a typical six-story house with a total floor area of 480m^2 housing 50 residents would give a per capita floor area of 9.6m^2 including stairs and common areas. In the *Cases* chapter I will account for visits made in Xian Cun to document how some migrants live in units of less than 5m^2, and sometimes these units are shared.

The urban villages are effectively exploited with little space left for public recreation or social programs. The house usually extends the entire area of the plot on the ground-level (100% ground coverage) and further expands with cantilevers from the second floor upwards, reducing the distance between buildings to that of a minimum, at the cost of air quality and natural light. In all the urban villages I have visited, however, there have always been some more generous spatial qualities, either linked to ponds, a sports ground or plazas in front of ancestral temples. These places have been extensively used, some mostly occupied by the local villagers, while others are used by the entire population of the village throughout the day.

---

10   Lan, Y. and P. Hu (2006) *Chengshihua zhong de shipaicun* [Urbanization of Shipai Village]. Beijing: Shihui Kexue Chubanshe.

1.3.5 BECOMING AN URBAN VILLAGE

"*Li Tu Bu Li Xiang (*leave the soil but not the village) turning the peasant homestead into a surrogate for the absent state" (Saunders 2010, p. 110).

Once, rural land in China was private property inherited from ancestors throughout generations (Lin *et al.* 2011). With the policy of the dual hukou system and the rural-urban divide, the rural land became collectively owned by the villagers. The collective land is of two kinds; the agricultural land and the residential land or *'zhaijidi'*. While households can acquire a piece of the residential land for self housing, they are not allowed to sell or rent out this property (ibid. 2011). They would also not be allowed to take the initiative to transform their agrarian land into urban development. The city governments can require that their land is transformed from agrarian land to urban land to facilitate factory areas and infrastructure during urban expansion and they can more easily requisition the farmland of the villages than the residential areas, as these areas demand higher compensations (ibid. 2011). The villagers are thus often left with their houses while their farmland is transformed into urban sprawl surrounding the existing residential area of the village.

According to Chung (2010), China's economic reforms since 1978 have not changed the rural-urban dualism. He builds on Jing (1999)[11] when claiming that "the attempt to standardize and institutionalize land-use practice through the introduction of new regulations, as a result of commercialization of land, has legitimized rather than resolved the dualism in city planning and land-use management" (Chung 2010, p. 426).

Prior to the appropriation of land by the municipality due to urban expansion, many of the villagers had already started developments away from the agrarian practice. In 1991, villages were allowed to develop industrial land equivalent to 15 square meters per villager in a policy named 'reserving village industrial land' (Zhou *et al.* 2011). Xian Cun, with its 2,252 villagers (2252x15 = 33780m^2) built 13 factories at that time according to the *Tianhe District Document Department Yearbook of 1991*, some for leasing to foreign enterprises and some for village-organized businesses. Villages were not allowed to use the development land for residential areas, only for industry. However, to attract the foreign businesses it became an advantage to be able to provide cheap housing for the workers of the development areas and it was provided informally by redeveloping their village houses (Zhao *et al.* 2011).

---

11   Jing, D. (1999) 'Chengshi lide nongcun yanjiu baogao' [A study report on villages-in-the-city]. *Chengshi Guihua* [Urban Planning] 9, 8–16.

The local villagers started "growing houses"[12]; that is, they started renting out a spare room in their old farmhouse, but when the demand from migrants looking for cheap housing near the industrial areas and business districts increased, they extended the houses with an extra floor, or would alternatively tear down the house to build a new and taller one of four to five stories, and later again tear it down and build a house of seven to nine floors, with rooms and small apartments to rent out. At this stage the local villagers would therefore often have an income enabling them to move out of the urban village themselves (absentee landlords), leaving the entire estate rented out for migrant residents. The urban villages are in different stages of this development, but the most densely built urban villages have reached an extreme building mass as discussed in the density section.

In the central financial district of Tianhe, the location of the village is good for renting, not only to migrant workers, but also for all kinds of commercial purposes. When these villagers had their farmland expropriated they were compensated with a share of the former rural land for their village to develop. In Guangzhou the government practiced a special 'reserved land policy' or '*liuyongdi zhengce*' entitling the villages that got their farmland requisitioned to eight to 12 percent of the land reserved for their own collective development of industries (Lin *et al.* 2011). On these lands the villagers tend to self-construct buildings to rent out, either by themselves or in cooperation with domestic or foreign investors.

Through this process of allowing the local villagers a share of the 'betterment value' of the transformed land from rural to urban, Zhau *et al.* (2011, p. 534) argue that the local villagers are no longer farmers but "they have turned into collective landlords who live mainly on a share of urban betterment value*"*. As the local villagers not only develop what they are assigned to develop, they also tend to find spaces for new developments in other areas within the village, which Zhao *et al.* (2011) describe as appropriated betterment value "through illegal village development". This is based on observations of illegal leasing of residences and the scale of illegally constructed factories they found in surveys in Xiamen, where the illegal factories far exceed the legal ones. Zhao *et al.* (2011) claim this practice is possible due to the ambiguous property rights.

1.3.6 URBAN VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION
Some of the once rural villages change administrational ties to those under an urban

---

12   Siu (2007, p. 331) on '*growing houses*': "Their main livelihood, as a villager puts it, has shifted from cultivating crops [gengtian] to cultivating real estate [gengwu]."

street committee, thus becoming a street office[13]. They are then seen as agents under the urban government at district level. Lin *et al.* describe how "the street office is responsible for local justice, community security, traffic control, fire protection, sanitation, street scoping, maintenances of open spaces, environmental protection, family planning, employment and labor force administration, day-care services, disaster protection, collective-owned businesses, community services and farmers' markets" (Lin *et al.* 2011, p. 15). In Xian Cun there were two administrative buildings; one main office dealing with the self development for the village collective with the village major and his staff working there, and one branch office under the street committee located in the new main shopping street handling migrant registrations and local villagers' rental activity.

The collective village administration is responsible for the self-development of secondary and tertiary industries in the land reserved for the village collective. The outcome of this can of course vary as they deal with the market economy with its given risks. In some instances, the village administration lacks the expertise and management experience and puts their village in debt, in other cases the system suffers from corruption as seen when the local villagers in Xian Cun put forward accusations towards their administration (see the *Cases* chapter for more details). Some villages prefer to lease land to other enterprises, rather than to self-construct, as this is less risky, but also generates less income.

1.3.7   THE URBAN VILLAGERS

According to Zhao *et al.* (2011) Gao writes[14] in a Chinese article that by 2004, 40 million farmers had lost their farmland due to urban growth. The number is increasing by two million every year. He further builds on He *et al.* (2008, 2009) showing how these farmers in reality are subsidizing the real cost of urbanization. Only the municipal government can legally convert rural land into urban land (Zhao *et al.* 2011, p. 530) and in doing so they render the market value of the land as it is leased out on the secondary land market. Since there is no property tax, the tax of industries leasing urban land is one of the major contributors to the municipal governments' economy, fuelled by the transformation from paddy fields to central business districts. In this transformation process, the local villagers are compensated for lost income from their fields. This occurs both as economic compensation given to the village committees and in the form of urban use rights to a share of their former rural land. When the village farmland is expropriated by the

---

13   The street office is both represented by elected local leaders and party representatives at a village level.

14   Gao, Y. (2004) 'Shiqu tudi de nongmin ruhe shenghuo' [How do landless farmers make a living?], *People's Daily*, 2 February.

municipal government and transformed from rural to urban land, the village will get permanent property rights to a share of this urban land as compensation for lost income from their fields. To manage this land they will establish a joint stock company where all villagers become shareholders. The rural villagers would therefore be involved in both the urban real estate and in urban businesses (Zhao *et al.* 2011).

Zhao *et al.* write how:
> "village compensation accounts show that villagers come out of the process far from the impoverished landless farmers portrayed in many accounts. It would be more accurate to describe them as landless informal landlords. It is factual to say that land expropriation makes them worse off, […] Impoverishment is probably not an appropriate term, however. Prior to expropriation, they made windfall profits from exploiting ambiguities in the property rights assigned them by various laws and policies governing rural-urban land conversion. Their income is reduced after the compensation settlement, but their rights to the land that generates it are more secure and clearly defined." (Zhao *et al.* 2011, p. 550)

Lin *et al.* (2011, pp. 7-8) claim "…the economic development of VICs in Guangzhou has greatly benefited from the urbanization process. With the increasing value of land, villagers cooperate with the private sector in self-development projects, which provide a large amount of redistributive income to villagers".
As with other private companies, the different urban villages are managed very discretely. In some ways they compete against other urban villages nearby on more or less the same terms to exploit their premises in the most profitable manner for the villagers' common good. While some villages manage to create a business management style that favors the shareholders with good annual profits, other villages have spent their compensation on investments that give little in return, or have allocated the income-generating activities to a select few, as local villagers claim has happened in Xian Cun. This results in neighboring villages like Shipai and Xian Cun housing local villagers with great variation in income from their village shares. Xian Cun villagers are among the villagers in the CBD earning the lowest profits according to representatives in the 'Local Villagers' Demonstration Office for Rightful Compensation' in Xian Cun.

The urban villages not only gain from an increasing land value, but can in many instances also benefit from the transformation of the surroundings. The location of the village can be improved in relation to proximity and accessibility to the surrounding urban fabric with services and employment within reach (Lin *et al.* 2011). The urban villages still

remaining in Guangzhou's CBD formerly found themselves several kilometers from the city center, but now they are situated in the midst of the infrastructural network of the city, with offices, shopping and important institutions coming their way. For instance, the new main city library and Guangdong museum are both located within walking distance from these villages.

Most local villagers see and use the potential in the new situation arising with the urban village status, and are therefore keen to tear down their original houses to build new apartment houses, while others try to maintain a more traditional village life. Looking for homeliness and familiarity in an ambience where continuity and connectedness to real places is vanishing is therefore a challenge. A few old courtyard houses can be seen in most of the core city villages, some vacant and some inhabited. While the migrants can feel alienated through their life in a village with ancestral halls, schools and kindergartens made for the local villagers and excluding the migrant residents unless they pay additional tuition fees, the local villagers can suffer the same degree of alienation within their hometown village. Even if they try to maintain their home and way of life as it always was, everything around them has changed, including the neighborhood skyline and the dialect of the many unfamiliar passersby.

1.3.8   HOUSING MIGRANT RESIDENTS IN THE URBAN VILLAGE

In Guangzhou, until recently there have been 138 urban villages. They amount to approximately 20% of the total urban area, but 70% of the migrants reside within this area (Siu 2005, Lin *et al.* 2011). Since the migrants make up roughly 40% of the total urban population according to Li (2004), this means that 20% of the city houses 30% of the population.

Compared to other options within the city, the urban village represents an inexpensive and practical solution to the housing demands of migrant residents (Zhang *et al.* 2003). There are dwellings of all prices in the urban village, down to 100 CNY a month for a bed in a shared room. The core city villages charge higher rents per square meter than more peri-urban villages, but the options found are also often smaller in size in the core city villages. In Shigangxi Cun we could see how the price for renting apartments would rise along with the transformation of the area surrounding the village, altering the peri-urban village to a more centrally located village, resulting in migrants with low wages finding new residence in more remote villages. The urban village streetscape will often be cramped and dark, but the tall apartment houses can reveal nice, clean and surprisingly airy apartments, providing good value for money. Electricity and running

water is usually provided. In Guangzhou 47.9% of the urban village population has access to the internet[15] (which is significantly higher than in urban villages in Beijing and Shenzhen).

1.3.9 THE URBAN VILLAGE AS A MULTICULTURAL SITE

The street office leader in Xian Cun said they had migrants from every province in China living in their village, "except perhaps from Xinjiang" he added. In my surveys, I have met people in Xian Cun from most parts of China. Many from Hunan, Hebei and Sichuan, but also some from more remote places like Inner-Mongolia. Many come from Chaoshan area, southeast in Guangdong Province. The Xinjiang nut sellers would also work within the village, appearing in their special hats with their bicycles loaded with nuts, raisins or big halva cakes. In certain periods you could see them all over the city, not only around the urban villages, but near all metro hubs and other crowded places. In an interview I did with one of them, he explained how they would come in groups of about 50 men and then stay for a couple of months to work in the city between harvests. He told me they all lived together in one urban village, but they worked all over the city, including many urban villages. This example is not just about diverse cultures meeting in the urban villages, but also of the character of the new arrivals and the effect on the neighborhood through the typical seasonal from-the-countryside-to-the-city oscillation carried out by some migrants residing in the urban villages. This activity also helps to shape the ambience of the urban villages as it is part of creating constant changes, as every new wave of arrivals takes part in transforming the urban village as a multicultural entity. Migrants and other residents of the village in the city have to negotiate their experiences of both belonging and a perception of difference through their encounters with the changing ambience [of the village] says Wise (2011) addressing similar multilayered multicultural spaces in Chinese migrant neighborhoods in Australia. This practice is "producing in turn complex forms of translocal belonging and localized displacements" (Wise 2011, p. 96) while it creates the place through connections to other places further away from the locality of the neighborhood.

1.3.10 THE URBAN VILLAGE AS AN ARENA OF EMPLACEMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

The urban village in Siu's words (2007) is an uncivil space, as being a migrant and being located in an urban village both indicate that one is *emplaced* and *displaced*. This notion can be seen in relation to the '*out of place'* and '*put in place'* parameters of Tamara Jacka

---

15   According to Zhigang Li in his presentation 'A comparative study of migrant villages in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou' at the 2nd International Conference on China's Urban Transition and City Planning, 2011.

(2006) accounted for in the *Theory* chapter.

The migrants and villagers come to terms with a disadvantaged position pursuant to Siu. The nationalist narrative promoted is one of modernization and development, but leaves the villagers and migrants associated with backwardness and national hurt (Siu 2007). This can be seen in poster campaigns running in the entrances of urban villages urging the population to act in a civilized manner by not spitting or throwing garbage, stealing or offending others, insinuating that the people residing in the urban villages are more likely to need this reminder than the regular urban population. Siu argues that for the Chinese context "displacement should not be equated with physical uprootedness but, instead, with cultural and political incarceration" (Siu 2007, p. 332).

Migrants and other residents of the urban villages have experiences of belonging as well as perceptions of difference. The massive presence of temporary migrant residents both strengthens local villagers' sense of belonging and the perception of difference in their meeting with the changing ambience of the village (Wise 2011, p. 94).

I will later argue that both migrant residents and local villagers in the urban villages somehow share the view of the urban village representing the unharmonious, messy and unwanted ambience of the city. I will account for interviews where residents have expressed how they support the idea of demolishing the urban village where they reside as they sincerely think the area would become a more beautiful and harmonious place if the urban village was gone. They adopt an understanding of the urban village as displaced within the city, although it often provides them with their only or most influential attachment to the city.

1.2   Poster campaign placed in one of the entrances of Xian Cun, urging people to behave civilized. Author's photograph, 2008.

CONTEXT

"…competing with nature is basically a Western idea. As a Chinese, you're always part of your surroundings. Nature can be a man-made or an industrial postmodern society. […] consciously or unconsciously you're in there, trying to build up some kind of relationship" (Ai Weiwei cited in Ulrich 2011, p. 69).

This chapter describes the conditions of the spatial practice related to land use and urban transformation in the Pearl River Delta (PRD), focusing in on the development in Guangzhou and Tianhe district.

Alongside the first chapter's introduction to the spatial practices of migrants in their interrelation with the city and its urban villages, this dual approach further discusses how to understand the fuzzy but ambitious transformation of the Pearl River Delta and how to interpret and understand the migrant agencies within the multi-scalar translocality of the flux ambience in the urban village and Chinese city.

The built projects (fences, buildings, infrastructure, campuses) included in the following sections are selected because through their location and position they represent the urban ambitions exposed in the urban transformation in Guangzhou. The major events and projects discussed herein are all related to desired strategies by the authorities controlling the transformation of the urban fabric. These projects and the way they are perceived confront the way urban residents, local villagers and the migrant residents can come to relate to the urban sphere. In the later chapters, I will come back to these projects and refer to them when analyzing the interviews and documentation. They represent fixed forms in a city in flux, and through the returning visits I show how their role and use are changing along with the transformation of the city.

2.1 PEARL RIVER DELTA

"By 2020, the region is expected to take the lead to have the modernization realized, a perfect system of socialist market economy established, industrial structure with modern service and manufacturing sectors developed, capability of technical innovation at the global level created, and coexistence of the people in the region harmonized. The region, in which Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao will cooperate and complement with each other, will become one of the

metropolitan regions in the world with strongest core competitive force." (*State of China's Cities Report* 2010, p. 30; on Pearl River Delta)[1]

This quote, however frenzied it may seem, reflects the aspirations in the policy of the Delta very well. The Pearl River Delta is in so many ways an extreme urban mutation dealt with on a mega-scale not seen before, and the means taken to form a spectacle like the one mentioned above are very concrete. How one sees the situation and the metamorphosis of the region is relevant for how to respond to this urban shake. As Italo Calvino (1972) lets Marco Polo and Kublai Khan interpret each other's imaginations of numerous imaginable cities when writing about Venice in his novel '*Invisible cities'*, the Pearl River Delta is envisioned and interpreted by researchers and planners in models as imaginative and extraordinary as the quote above.

Below I will briefly explain the model called 'City of Exacerbated difference', but first I will look at the fluid presence of the delta explained in Gutierrez and Portefaix's 'lean planning' approach. With its focus on the flow and the fluidal landscape, the article connects to a broader picture of describing the conditions of the delta at present being in flux. As opposed to a fixed landscape and ordered transformation, the situation in the Pearl River Delta described here is in many ways a floating mesh. To put this view in perspective I will present an overview of ongoing debates surrounding the Pearl River Delta conditions and future scenarios, along with the neutral facts of size and scope.

2.1.1 AMPHIBIAN LAND

Count Ludovic de Beavoir made a world tour between 1865 and 1867 and he describes how Canton "…consists of two cities, the floating city and the terrestrial city (…) [With] thousands of barges where whole families live*" (Imbot-Bichet cited in Edelmann 2008, p. 295)[2].

This is an observation of a delta where both land and sea were used for living and agricultural production. The boat-dwelling laborers were referred to as '*dan*', and they

---

1   UN Habitat has for the first time supported *the State of China's Cities Report* to be released in 2010 along with the *Report on the State of Asian Cities*, also released in 2010. The State of China's Cities has been jointly organized and launched by the China Science Center of International Eurasian Academy of Sciences and the China Association of Mayors, and the UN Habitat. This report bears clear indications in several instances of being blueprints for pre-formulated official Chinese announcements, and does not always act as a neutral analytical text, as this quote represents.
2   Beavoir cited from the book *Voyage autour de monde*: Java, Siam, Canton, Kailash, 1992. Description dated February 15, 1867 according to Geneviève Imbot-Bichet, in the article 'Cities' in the book*: In the Chinese city. Perspectives on the Transmutations of an Empire*, editor: Frédéric Edelmann, 2008.

were considered a sub-ethnic group by the land-based agriculturalists (Siu 1990). The river system itself took the last 4,000 to 5,000 years to form its 100km long delta system with typical tide-dominated distributary bell-shaped river mouths, allowing for big ships to enter the river ports (Goddard 2009). Guangzhou, a seaside city 2,000 years ago, benefited from this tidal sedimentation as it became a riverside city.

Man has contributed largely to produce reclaimed land in the delta during the last 1,000 years through man-made embankments (Goddard in Siu 1990). Since the Ming dynasty, the lineage trusts and guilds in the cities of the old delta started big projects of land reclamation involving large-scale capital investment and planning (Siu 1990). Building dikes that increased sedimentation for each annual tidal flow, they managed to accelerate the reclamation, and the 'sha' or the sands became rice fields and mulberry dikes to feed the expanding silk cocoon industry. In 1950 they had made more than 1,300km of levees and dikes, some of them more than seven meters high and four meters wide (Goddard 2009).

In many newly claimed lands, the landlords forbade the construction of permanent houses and settlements. They did so to avoid taxes by claiming the area was unsettled. People either lived in boats or on the sands in temporary mud and straw huts. According to Siu (1990) the people of the sands have until recently been considered "poor, migrant, ethnically inferior and lacking of social grace". The land reforms in the 1950s did not result in more stable settlements in these areas until the 1970s. However, some of the outposts had already become prosperous market towns in the late nineteenth century. Xiaolan is one of them, with 393 ancestral halls in a town of 20,000 residents by the mid-twentieth century. Siu (1990) explains how this town "…represented a phenomenal proliferation of wealth under the shadow of ancestors". The ancestors, who were traced as migrants from Northern Guangdong eight centuries ago by the locals in Xiaolan, were celebrated in grand festivals, which gave a historical depth to their presence in the reclaimed land. The dispute for the legitimacy to claim the right for the constructed land was one between long lineages in the old part of the delta, often entitled to tax exemptions, and that of the settlers in the outposts building on their ancestors' presence in the area (Siu 1990).

The French architects and researchers of the transformation in Pearl River Delta, Gutierrez and Portefaix ask "How can we understand a condition that is lived by millions of people, but still not completely materialized? [In Pearl River Delta] Space is inundated. It is not possible to distinguish exactly what is land and what is floating" (Gutierrez and

Portefaix 2003, p. 71) [3].

The Pearl River Delta as it appears today "represents a synthesis of universal elements belonging to a global flow but with the specifics of a local territory" in the words of Gutierrez and Portefaix. The Pearl River Delta is physically a transitional space. Formed in the convergence of three rivers, it contains a gradually extended land that has developed into a network of settlements. It is neither neutral nor stable; it is potentially amphibious land, where transformations affect the stability of the ground and everything planned and built onto and into it, in both a material and immaterial sense. The delta is conceived as a fluctuating reality, and this influences the planning at present and how the future is imagined.

Gutierrez and Portefaix look at how the economic reform in the last few decades resulted in the hyper-specialization in the region à la the 'City of Exacerbated difference', which is explained later. Instead of encouraging diversification, they argue how the many small communities in the delta encouraged specialized production. They represent mono-productive cultures derived from the nineteenth-century system of agro-production and inter-dependence between villages, and the villages are capitalizing into becoming the richest source in the delta, due to their strategic location and the new economic interest and demand for land (Gutierrez and Portefaix 2003, p. 73).

The 'lean production', known as the 'Toyota Production System', was launched in 1970 with its just-in-time manufacturing based on waste reduction and maximum flexibility, as a reaction to Henry Ford's moving assembly line from 1913. Gutierrez and Portefaix argue how 'lean production' is a form suited to exploit the potential of the delta as it has been constructed with its resources of a flexible workforce, many interlinked settlements within short distances, good distribution of infrastructure internally and a well-established global connections. They further argue how 'lean planning' can express how it has come to direct the dynamics specific to the delta, emerged as "... a multilayered space of flow encourage[ing] a multiplicity of archipelagos that are connected by an efficient networked society under permanent control" (Gutierrez and Portefaix 2003, p. 77). The 'lean planning' can be seen in the development of a region as a single entity with efficient infrastructure and well-distributed factories.

> "With no particular concern for spatial sequence or articulation, these extensive
> flow lines constitute an effective strategy for colonization, transforming the

---

3   Laurent Gutierrez and Valérie Portefaix (2003) *Pearl River Delta: Lean Planning, Thin Patterns.*

landscape into a series of polynuclear construction systems, therefore reinforcing the hybrid condition of the territory. Within this configuration, access becomes a measure of the mobility and fluidity of urban expansion." (Gutierrez and Portefaix 2003, p. 77)

Agrarian land materialized as a result of the reclamation of the river and it is now immaterializing as agrarian land through the urban project. In the book *'Compact cities: Sustainable Urban Forms for Developing Countries'* (Jenks *et al.* 2000), Anthony Gar-On Yeh and Xia Li write in their contribution[4] on agricultural land-loss in the Pearl River Delta that the paddy production in Dongguan dropped by 63% between 1979 and 1994, highlighting the loss of agricultural land during the 15 first years after the economic reforms of 1978. It is an indication of both how the pressure on agrarian land has increased due to a growing population and extended building activity requiring more space, but also how the many polluting factories in the area have put more of a strain on the remaining fields.

2.1.2 PERMANENT STRATEGIC PANIC[5]

The Pearl River Delta or *'Zhusanjiao'* is one of the most densely populated areas in the world, and one of the major production and trade hubs of China. Its development is largely founded on its location by the Pearl River Delta, made up by the three rivers, Bei Jiang (North River), Dong Jiang (East River) and Xi Jiang (West River), connecting the delta region to a vast hinterland. Chinese civilization can be said to originate along the three main west-east rivers; Huang He (Yellow River) in the north, Yangtze in the middle and Xi Jiang leading to the Pearl River Delta in the south. The Xi Jiang river is the third longest river in China and the second largest by volume, a navigable commercial waterway that is sourced in Yunnan province and connects the delta in the south east to the Himalayas, and central cities such as Wuzhou.

This location made the port of Guangzhou an important one for more than two thousand years. During the Tang dynasty, the city bloomed with foreign traders coming for the silk and porcelain, and building a big Muslim community. The most ancient mosque dates back to 627 AD. Guangzhou was also the only Chinese port open for Western traders between 1757 and 1842, something that made Guangzhou the third biggest city

---

4 *The need for compact development in the fast-growing areas of China: The Pearl River Delta*, pp. 73-91
5 *'Permanent strategic panic'* is the state of the climate in PRD described as *'the City of Exacerbated Difference'*, see next section (Chung *et al.* 2001).

SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES (SEZ)

1 Pudong District, Shanghai Municipality

2 Xiamen, Fujian Province

3 Shantou, Guangdon Province

4 Shenzhen, Guangdon Province

5 Zhuhai, Guangdon Province

6 Hainan Province

SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGIONS (SAR)

A Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

B Macau Special Administrative Region

OPEN COASTAL CITIES

1 Beihai

2 Zhanjiang

3 Guangzhou

4 Fuzhou

5 Wenzhou

6 Ningbo

7 Shanghai

8 Nantong

9 Lianyungang

10 Qingdao

11 Yantai

12 Hanjin

13 Qinhuandao

14 Dalian
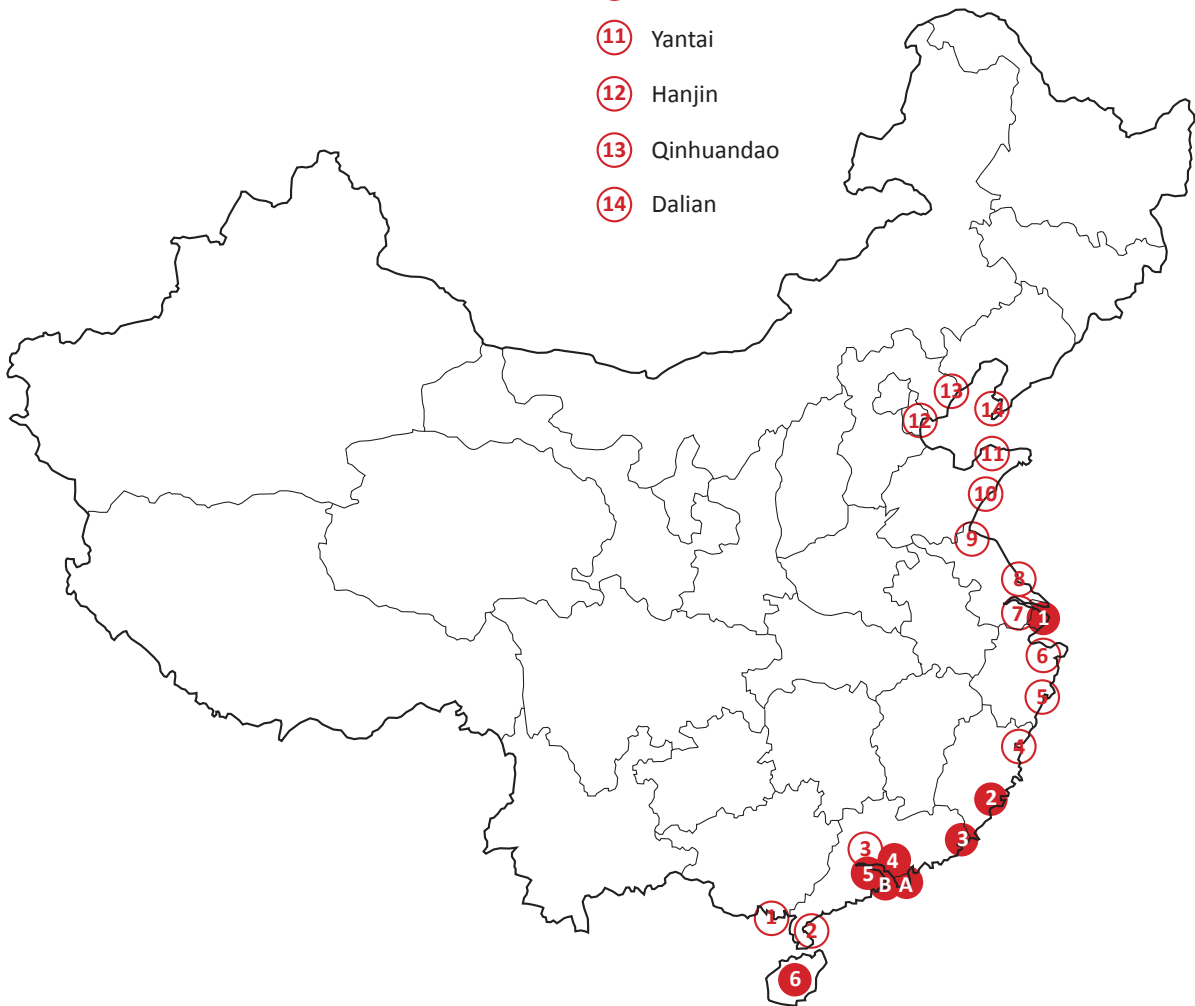
2.1 Map of China with Special Administrative Regions, Special Economic Zones and Open Coastal Cities marked. Author's illustration.

in the world in 1800[6]. Not only Guangzhou, but the entire delta was influenced by the important global trade. International political complications resulted in Macao and Hong Kong being established as major settlements in the 16th century and after the first opium war (1839-42). They now both hold the status of being 'Special Administrative Regions' (SAR) within the People's Republic of China. The 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZ) were formed in Shenzhen across the border from Hong Kong, and Zhuhai across the border from Macau in the beginning of the 1980s, along with Shantou in west-Guangdong province, Xiamen in Fujian province north of Guangdong, and Hainan island outside the west coast of Guangdong province. The chosen sites of the economic experiments were both strategic as a means of providing a production base near Hong Kong and Macau, and building on the region's tradition of foreign influence and trade. Also, its peripheral location to Beijing, reducing its threat to the national stability, was of importance (Ma Qingyun 2003, cited in Edelmann 2008, p. 297). When these first experiments proved economically successful, others followed. Guangzhou was one of 14 coastal cities that opened up to overseas investment from 1984, and together with the SEZs, this became important in establishing the Pearl River Delta as one of the major actors in China's economic reform and experimental laboratories of capitalism, referred to as the "new golden triangle of liberalism" by Ma Qingyun (2003)[7].

In *The State of China's Cities* (2010) they operate with the term 'Greater Pearl River Delta', referring to the administrative area consisting of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. This region has a total of 181,000 square kilometers of land, which accounts for 1.9% of the total land of China. In this area, 7.8% of the total population in China, or 104 million inhabitants as of 2009, permanently reside there according to the same report. The urbanization level is surpassing 80% in its core areas, and for this it is topping the three most densely distributed regions of China; the other two being the Yangtze River Delta with Shanghai as its pivotal city and Beijing-Tianjin and Hebei region. The urban density and good infrastructure are some of the most important competitive factors for these regions operating as multifaceted clusters. Non-stop production is maintained with spare parts sourced from the surrounding delta, never being further away from a shop floor than an hour or two.

---

6   Guangzhou had a population of 800,000. Only Beijing with 1.1 million and London with 861,000 residents were listed as having a bigger population in the year 1800. See: http://geography.about.com/library/weekly/aa011201e.htm

7   In Le Paradigme du delta dans lùrbanisme chinois, In Alors, la Chine? Catalogue of the exhibition staged at the Centre Pompidou, October 2003, cited in the article 'Cities' by Geneviève Imbot-Bichet in: Edelmann (2008) p. 297.

The Pearl River Delta region has a gross product of 5,492 billion Yuan. This accounts for 16.4% of China's GDP. The gross product of the cities at and above the prefecture level in the three most densely distributed regions accounted for 33% of the total gross product of all the cities in China at prefecture level and above in 2009 (*State of China's Cities* 2010, p. 28).

During the financial and economic crisis of 2008, the export-oriented region of the Pearl River Delta was severely hit, and the migrants, being the most vulnerable group working on the shop floors of the export industries with no social security, were the worst off, leading to many protests and clashes with riot police within the Delta. During the last quarter of 2008, 50,000 factories were closed down in Guangdong province alone (Chan 2010), and even though there has always been a high turnover in this region, and some of the closures were fictive to avoid workers' payments, this is an exceptionally high number. All over the delta, workers were made redundant or had to accept agreements of lower payment in the last few months of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. In China, the total unemployment among rural migrant laborers is estimated to have been 23 million in early 2009. That makes up 16.4% of the migrant workforce and it stands in stark contrast to the 4.3% unemployment among the urban residents in the same period, all according to Kam Wing Chan (2010). In Shenzhen, two million migrant workers did not return to the city after the New Year holiday at the beginning of 2009 (Saunders 2010). As Saunders put it in his book on arrival cities, "the world's largest purpose-built arrival city failed to attract the arrivals" (Saunders 2010, p. 60).

Qin Hui held a speech in Shenzhen declaring that Shenzhen needed to encourage the development of shantytown slums to solve its problem of the mass departure of workers according to Saunders (2010, p. 61). When Qin refers to shantytown slums, it is another word for the facilities provided by the urban villages. Shenzhen had a number of urban villages in the '90s, but throughout the early 2000s the city launched several 'clean up and comb out campaigns' that got rid of many of its urban villages. In 2004, when the floating population was said to have reached 10 million residents and the rented apartments numbered two million, they launched 'Action Combing'. This was the biggest survey campaign of its time, combining efforts from all the relevant departments within the management of Shenzhen, developing a 'clean-up campaign' within four months (*Shenzhen Daily* July 14, 2004). This effort and similar events have made it more expensive and inconvenient to find an affordable place to live when working as a migrant in Shenzhen. Countermeasures have been launched to attract enough workers to sustain the many factories still operating in the city (Saunders 2010). In the local media the

challenge of Shenzhen has partly been explained in a different way, with a desired change for its urban path, from being based on primary production and unskilled workers to a service sector city for an educated population. The challenge expressed in the media as the prime production is replaced with more technically advanced production methods has been how to attract the right blue-collar workers and to get rid of all the unskilled workers no longer needed in the area[8].

2.1.3 EQUILIBRIUM OF COMPLEMENTARY EXTREMES

The Pearl River Delta functions as a closely interwoven region made up of competing cities. For global investors, it is not a big difference if the production is situated in Shenzhen, Dongguan or Panyu, in regard to the distance to the world market, access to a cheap workforce or production facilities. When they search for the chosen site in the competing cities, they look for opportunities that can distinguish the different locations, and these opportunities and advantages are created or facilitated by the local governments to attract certain developers. As a result of this the different cities brand themselves as distinct and unique and look for areas of specialization.

Panyu, a district of Guangzhou[9], has for instance managed to create a jewelry cluster of more than 400 related companies and 80,000 employees. Within the last two decades, it has become the biggest jewelry production cluster for international trade in China. To facilitate the continuous growth of the industry, the Ministry of Commerce and Guangzhou Government jointly established an international jewelry trading platform in 2004 running industrial parks and opening a Global Jewelry Operation Center[10]. Equally one can find industrial parks specializing in textiles, toys, sports gear, IT and cars to name a few.

In their 'project on the city' referred to in Chung (2001), Harvard Design School and Rem Koolhaas worked on models to understand the Pearl River Delta as a new form of urban coexistence. They interpreted the urban condition of the delta in the model of 'The City of Exacerbated Difference' defined as the following:

> "The CITY OF EXACERABATED DIFFERENCE (COED)
> The traditional city strives for a condition of balance, harmony, and a degree of homogeneity. The CITY OF EXACERABATED DIFFERENCE, on the contrary, is

---

8   See for instance Tao (2010) in *China Daily.*
9   Panyu is where the urban village Shigangxi Cun is located and has been the site for the collaboration on the *Photo Documentation Project* and *House Rent Project*.
10   See: http://www.worldmart.com.cn/support/en/group.html [Accessed: 2011-03-15]

40

based on the greatest possible difference between its parts, complementary or competitive.

In a climate of permanent strategic panic, what counts in the CITY OF EXACERBATED DIFFERENCE is not the methodological creation of the ideal, but the opportunistic exploitation of flukes, accidents, and imperfections. Although the model of the CITY OF EXACERBATED DIFFERENCE appears brutal - to depend on the robustness and primitiveness of its parts - the paradox is that it is, in fact, delicate and sensitive.

The slightest modification of any detail requires the readjustment of the whole to reassert the equilibrium of complementary extremes."[11]

In the case of the jewelry production in Panyu for instance, the location in the Delta meant it could gain from the closeness to Hong Kong, where the jewelry industry had been one of the main manufacturing trades for decades, being the fourth largest exporter of precious jewelry in the world and the biggest exporter of imitation jewelry in the world (Hong Kong Trade Development Council 2009). Panyu and Shenzhen became the destination for Hong Kong brands' outsourcing factories, and the mainland production now accounts for 95% of all the imitation jewelry exported from Hong Kong. While gaining from the Hong Kong industry to boost production and craft skills, Panyu established its own Jewelry School at Guangzhou Panyu Polytechnic, along with other relevant studies in toy production and software. Mainland Chinese companies producing and branding jewelry were established and soon became a competitor and not just a re-export supplier to the Hong Kong market. Furthermore, Panyu established its own international jewelry fair, the 'China International Gold, Jewellery and Gem Fair', hosted in Guangzhou, attracting buyers from the EU, US and beyond.

This is one example of how a small place within the delta can come to play a major role within the global market. Competing with similar attempts in Shenzhen and Shanghai, and also affected by the world economy, the positioning of Panyu as a main supplier of jewelry in the world constantly needs assistance from the local government, exemplified by the developments with the school, the fair and the trading platform.

In 2009, economic planners released the idea of transforming the Pearl River Delta into a technological innovation hub, striving for it to attract research, design and innovation companies. Officially, the planners aim for high-tech manufacturing to generate at least 30% of the region's total industrial output by 2020, and already in 2012 they expect to

11   Definition in glossary, pp. 704 in *Great Leap Forward*. (Chung *et al.* 2001)

obtain 600 patent applications per one million people annually according to *China Daily* 2009.

When the future role of the Pearl River is addressed, we come back to the quote at the very beginning of this chapter. In January 2011 we could read in Western media of the plans to merge nine of the core cities of the Pearl River Delta into the biggest mega city in the world. The 'turn the Pearl River Delta into one' scheme will create an urban agglomeration of 42 million permanent residents in an urban area 26 times larger than greater London. The cities included are Dongguan (6.4 million), Foshan (5.4 million), Guangzhou (11.7 million), Jiangmen (3.8 million), Shenzhen (8.9 million), Zhaoqing (3.9 million people), Zhongshan (2.4 million) and Zhuhai (1.5 million). For the next six years, they will invest two trillion CNY in 150 major infrastructure projects to link the transport, energy, water and telecommunication networks of the nine cities. For instance the rail connections between the nine city centers will be improved to allow for a maximum of one hour journey between the different centers within the new mega city (Foster and Moore 2011).

The need to improve the delta cities' attractiveness is not only related to increasing their exported goods but also to the attraction of the Chinese workforce. Shenzhen witnessed two million temporary residents going home for the spring festival and not coming back to the city after the holiday in 2009 (Saunders 2010); when that many migrant residents choose to either stay at home or try their luck in a different city, it proves another aspect of the vulnerability of these cities, depending largely on the floating population and their workforce. The exploitive dependency faced by the cities in the delta can be described as brutal: "This hidden urbanity, which lives off the energy of a population with an average age of 22, represents the necessary motor that powers the region" (Gutierrez and Portefaix 2003, p. 73).

Despite this, Gutierrez and Portefaix describe forces of the Pearl River Delta as progressive and creative, where multiple processes construct "… a system that includes an infinite addition of layers encounter fields of reflection" (ibid. 2003, p. 71).

When describing the contradicting conditions in the development of the PRD, I chose to build on the notion of the many aspects of the fluctuating reality described through definitions of the COED and the lean planning approach. To broaden the discussion I look at the findings from my surveys in relation to that of the everyday urbanism approach, explained in the *Theory* chapter.

The places' relations to the region seen as expressions of locality, play a major part in the competing force of each and every place or unit within the delta. I try to build on this notion by understanding the span between the local and the global within the localities. This will be elaborated through the stories of the places I detail throughout the next sections in this chapter and in the *Cases* chapter.

2.2 GUANGZHOU

2.2.1 THE TIRED OLD MAN WHO CAME TO BE THE SPRAWLING BEAST

Guangzhou is the provincial capital of Guangdong province and one of the five National Central Cities with sub-provincial administrative status. It is the largest city in the Pearl River Delta and a city of historic importance. It was the capital of the Nanyue Kingdom from 206 BC. While several of the cities in the delta had a magnificent economic boost in late '80s and early '90s, caused by the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) of Shenzhen and Zhuhai and the general increase in foreign investments and growing production in the region, Guangzhou lagged behind, partly due to the burden of its bureaucratic obligations as a provincial capital. According to Yuyang Liu cited in Chung (2001, p. 449) Guangzhou was nicknamed the 'tired old man' as it was the neglected city that "…suffered from its large population, housing shortage, old industrial plants and lack of urban infrastructure" as well as its "bureaucratic slowness" (Chung 2001, p. 449).

Today Guangzhou boosts its image of being a world metropolis of modern dimensions, with China's second busiest airport since 2007[12], the tallest tower in the world (as of 2010,), Canton Tower, soaring 600 meters into the sky, extensive metro-lines, the first rapid bus transit system in China, the biggest university campus in the world and so forth.

In his article on subways and car culture in China, Keith Bradcher, (journalist for the *New York Times),* describes in an article the challenge of providing enough infrastructure to cities where car sales have soared ninefold since 2000, and where the city is ever-expanding due to policies allowing real estate developers to build sprawling new suburbs. The examples he uses are all from Guangzhou, where the subway extensions seem extremely ambitious when compared to New York for instance. Sixty tunnel boring machines in Guangzhou work day and night to complete 83 miles of new lines within a year, while New York has one tunnel boring machine estimated to spend eight years on

---

12   In terms of passengers according to the official web page of Baiun airport, Guangzhou. Available at: http://www.guangzhouairportonline.com [Accessed: 2011-02-02]

a 1.7 mile new line. Due to the extreme urban growth, this unparalleled speed of mass transit extensions can't keep track of the increased demands on transport in Guangzhou and other Chinese cities as "the nation's cities are also sprawling beasts" (Bradcher 2009). These beasts are fed by farmland. According to official Chinese statistical data, the urban sprawl has resulted in 40 million farmers in expanding urban areas losing their farmland, and this number is ever-increasing with two million new landless farmers in China every year (Liu *et al.* 2010)[13].

In the following section I will look at the overall development of the city of Guangzhou and zoom in on the University Island with Nanting Cun. I will further look at Tianhe district with the urban village of Xian Cun to see how it elaborated with the surrounding city. To do so I will use several incidents and situations that have played a role in the transformation of the city and its spatial relations, among them the Asian Games. This will not be a chronological display of urban development, rather a portrait of transformational incidents and processes in the city.

2.2.2   POST-EVENT CITIES

The preparations for the Asian Games in Guangzhou in 2010 can in many ways be compared to that of Beijing prior to the Olympics or Shanghai before the EXPO in relation to urban transformation. In their article *'Post-Event Cities'*, Zhi Wenjun and Liu Yuyang (2008) start out by writing: "In the not-so-distant past, the 'event-city' referred to the everyday conditions embedded in architecture. In China it is the architecture that is embedded in the event. Consequently, both the nature of the event and that of architecture have changed." They argue how one can see the mega events as the temporal and global counterparts to spatial and local Chinese urban conditions and geopolitical inventions, such as with Special Economic Zones or the model of the 'City of Exacerbated Difference'. They point to a major shift in policy in dealing with the big events, from the Beijing Olympics to the Expo in Shanghai. Beijing supported spectacular architecture placed in new areas outside the urban center, while Shanghai Expo stressed environmental sustainability and social harmony in a site within the urban core. They utilized and renovated existing buildings as well as encouraging post-event integration of the EXPO sites to its surroundings, in addition to strengthening the overall connectedness of the city through eight new metro lines. In the article they optimistically claim that the policy and ideological foundations of the urban planning strategies have been achieved beyond the spectacles of the event, neglecting to mention the many inhabitants who

---

13   Liu *et al.* 2010 refer to a Chinese article on this statistical data: Gao, Y., 2004*: 'Shiqu tudi de nongmin ruhe shenghuo'* translated to 'How do landless farmers make a living?'.

44

were forced to move to allow for the EXPO to take place for instance. As China is facing hundreds of millions of new urban dwellers they argue how "...The demand to raise the standard of living for so many people will no doubt be the greatest challenge and opportunity for architecture. Such a demand is based on real needs, not spectacles", stressing that "... the right direction for the planning of China's post-event cities to take, [...is for] events [to] become incubators for ideas, policies and actions, not just mere buildings" (Liu 2008).

The Asian Games in Guangzhou can be said to represent characteristics of both the Olympics in Beijing and the Expo in Shanghai in the sense that it spent a lot of resources on singular architectural structures and played a part in strengthening the sprawl through new urban areas outside the city center, while also investing largely in improved mass transit systems and recreational areas benefiting the overall city. However, Guangzhou is not a one-time event city. There are layers of different kinds of events influencing the urban planning of the city, with the Pearl River Delta urbanization representing the long-term transformational process of events. There is also the annual trade fair, the 'Canton fair' or 'China import and export fair', which has been China's largest international trade fair since 1957, influencing the day-to-day use of the city, as it lasts for several weeks twice a year. In its spring program of 2010 it boasted more than 200,000 foreign buyers and US$34 billion of trade during its three-phase, three-week-long event according to its official web pages[14], which further states that the Canton Fair complex, the main venue, is the largest exhibition center in Asia, with a total construction area of 1.1 million m^2. Its location on the south shore of Pearl River is well connected with two metro stops on line two, and with the Huanan expressway to its left and Keyun Lu to its right, providing both south-north and ring road connections. All hotel information web pages in Guangzhou give details about their distance from the Canton Fair complex. During the fairs, hotel prices increase threefold, and thousands of students from local universities volunteer to guide and assist foreigners in the city. The recurring events to some extent balance the anxiety that Zhi and Liu mention of a great economic downturn after the mega events leading to an 'addiction' for cities to continue to host bigger events.

2.2.3   ASIAN GAMES 2010 - GUANGZHOU
The last makeover of the tired old man
Streets were paved with new asphalt, old houses painted, new fences put up to block unwanted sights, and trees were planted to create numerous new green alleys. Urban

---

14   http://www.cantonfair.org.cn/en/about/detail.aspx?oid=131

logistics were improved with new walkways, metro lines and a rapid bus transit system was launched. In October 2010, Wan Qingliang, the mayor of Guangzhou, said at a press conference that the total investment related to the Asian Games and Asian Para Games totaled 122.6 billion CNY. The infrastructure investments accounted for 109 billion CNY, including expansion of the metro system, roads and water treatment projects. 6.3 billion CNY were expected to be spent on the Games' 50 venues, modifying and expanding 38 existing venues and constructing 12 new venues, all according to Tong (2010).

Just as much as to attract and impress foreigners, the games were used to unify and strengthen the identity of the population. In April 2008, as part of the preparations for the games, Zhao Nanxian, Deputy Secretary General of Guangzhou Municipal Government announced the campaign in Shenzhen News: "Welcome Asian Games, Be Civilized, Establish a New Image and Promote Harmony". Directed at local residents, this campaign was launched in Guangzhou, aiming to: "welcome, serve and host successful Asian Games with its first-class resident civilization, first-class public order, first-class service quality, first-class urban and rural environment, and first-class social custom as well as to make it into a harmonious, green and civilized Asian Games with Chinese characteristics in Cantonese style showcasing Guangzhou's fascination" (Shenzhen News 2008).

In many instances the reasons for change could combine different aims. Air pollution was a major problem, not just for the games but in general. Arguing that they build more harmony and civilization as well as fighting pollution, they were able to temporarily banning food stalls in the streets for instance. For the game preparations the pollution required special attention, and in the years between 2008 and 2010 the focus was on emissions of carbon dioxide and sulfur dioxide to be reduced to meet national level II standards during the games. The focus was long-term, aiming to improve the air quality in all of Guangdong on a yearly basis, but with emphasis on November and December 2010, when the games would be arranged. Late autumn is generally a difficult time air quality wise in this region, and the authorities had to restrict several polluting sources through last-minute actions to fulfill their requirements. Some of the efforts done were strictly aimed at bettering the air quality during the games, while others had more long-term effects. For instance they introduced the even/odd-license plate method during the daytime from November 1st to reduce vehicle use by 40% (One India News 2010) and banned barbecue stalls in the streets two weeks prior to the games (Sify News 2010), while more long-term gains were made by removing or closing chemical plants, cement plants and paper mills (Qiu 2009).

2.2.4 ASIAN GAMES AND THE URBAN PLANNING EFFORTS

Since Guangzhou was given the responsibility to host the Asian Games in 2004, the city used the event as an important foundation for the main themes in the planning strategy of the city's transformation, and also let the requirements of the Asian Games strengthen the planned structures already under development. New facilities were built in areas of urban expansion like the University Island and Nansha. I will mainly focus on the efforts made in the main axis of the Pearl River New Town in Tianhe financial district and in the Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Center on University Island as the urban villages I have followed are located there. As the games were co-hosted by Guangzhou and the neighboring cities of Foshan, Dongguan and Shanwei, this was also a good opportunity to improve the infrastructure on roads and mass transit links between the cities.
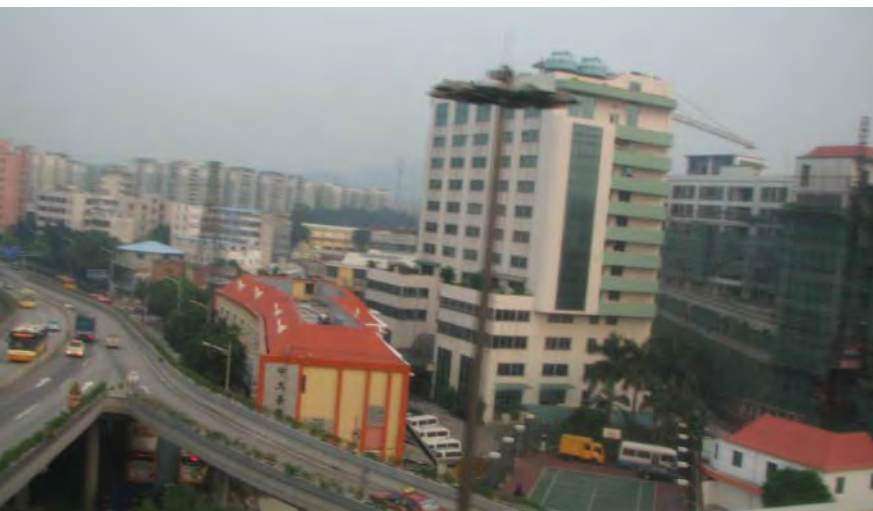
2.2   Houses and villages renovated in front of the Asian Games 2010. Author's photographs, September 2010.

One of the first things a returning visitor would notice after arriving in the enlarged airport would be that thousands and thousands of buildings in small communities along the main roads into the city had been painted light yellow and the flat roofs had new red tilted tops attached. The same treatment was given to industrial areas and villages with housing along the main roads making them appear more uniform and in unison. Apparently they also strived for a more 'cozy' expression in this rational environment of cheap buildings, by adding rooftop pavilions that appeared almost Italian. I never saw anyone using them, and I do not know if they were to be accessed at all. It was maybe meant as an imaginable place for dreams to form when passing by the highway, and not actually for the laundry or a long drink on the rooftop in the sunset. In many instances they removed the buildings closest to the road to allow for a green lane and some newly planted trees to buffer from the traffic. When seeing these buildings from above, one could see that the tilted roofs were only corrugated steel with built-in arches providing a visual effect only. The roof surfaces did not even meet at the top, and thus did not provide new useful spaces, only creating a coulisse that prevented the earlier use of drying clothes or drying food. One possible positive effect of the new construction layer is that since the roof was not an enclosed space it would not store heat, but rather let the hot air evaporate at the same time as it provided shade for the top floor.

I was convinced the new shaded and partly covered roof-floors would find many unintended uses after the Asian games, but when I came to look in October 2011 I was surprised to see most of them were not in use. During a visit to Nanting Cun we saw how most of the additional roofs were uninhabited. In most cases there were no entrances providing access to the new floors, although in this village the roofs were not only fake coulisses but steel-framed rooms with ribbed walls and roofs. They extended the entire roof, and attempted to seal off the rain. The new attics had an acceptable height and spatial qualities, good views and good cross-ventilation, but of course they were hot in summer as they were all painted black. Among restaurant houses lined up along the street by the Art Academy, there was only one of the new attics partly in use. It was used as storage for bottles and other things that would not be damaged by heat or rain as it was not a waterproof room. Inside the village near the fields we found one apartment rented out to art students using the attic as their studio. The two rooms they actually rented were small bedrooms with only space for a bed, a table and storage. The attic allowed them to work on art projects at home and also made a good gathering place for their friends. By October 2010 the roof was leaking and most of their things were wet. They had kind of given up on using the room, although in the dry winter it had been a

very useful place for them[15].

2.2.5   GUANGZHOU HIGHER EDUCATION MEGA CENTER

Several of the stadiums and sports facilities of the Asian Games were located at Xiaogu Wei, the new University Island, officially named Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Center, including the cricket stadium next to the Art Academy and Nanting Cun.

The first phase of the Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Center was opened in 2004. The consultancy work for the master plan of the 10,000-acre island *Xiaogu wei* was done partly by Ayer/Saint/Cross (US), and Steffian Bradley Associates (UK), both major international campus-planners. The size of the island is comparable with the entire old city center of Guangzhou. The former orchard island was totally refurbished, with ten of its 14 former villages demolished and relocating ten universities from the region to the island. Nine of the ten universities still have campuses in the city center and there are direct shuttle buses connecting the university campuses with their respective downtown campuses. With lawns and parks and wide, vacant six to eight-lane roads departing the dormitories and teaching facilities, every university occupies its own space. This is a place far from the bustling city, enclosing and isolating the students more than connecting them to a community. Moving the students to out-of-town campuses was not purely done as a means to destabilize the student movement. Gathering the universities together and facilitating better collaboration among the institutions to strengthen their capacity is officially argued to be the main reason for the multiple-university campus on the island. In the case of Guangzhou, the Pearl River Delta authorities also introduced the university campus idea to strengthen the visual appearance of the knowledge production. This was done as part of the continuous competition of attracting new businesses and industries among the main productive clusters in China. Both Shanghai and Beijing at the time held a stronger position in relation to education and were thus able to attract more knowledge-based industries.

The universities hold their Bachelor degrees on the Island Xiaogu Wei, while many of the universities keep their Master's programs and research activity in their city campuses. Students and teachers I have talked to prefer to live and work in the city campus as it is better connected to the surrounding city. The University Island does provide several good qualities though. Even people from the city go to the island to cycle on the empty streets surrounded with greenery and nice views of the Pearl River on Sundays and they rest and eat ice cream under the impressive banyan trees in the harbor area of Nanting .

---

15   See the *Cases* chapter, Nanting Cun section for more on this case.

2.3   Aerial view of Guangzhou with old walled city center (red) and Guangzhou Higher Education Mega Center (yellow) marked for comparison. Illustration by author. Based on Google Earth.

The remaining four villages on the island are under pressure for demolition. As they moved parts of their education to the island, the Art Academy has actively showed how the interchange with the neighboring community of the village is an important challenge for their students when reflecting on society in their approach to study. They go to the village to draw, act and elaborate the relations to the village in their student works. The populations in these villages are relatively small and can neither absorb too many students nor provide a wide cultural scene. They do facilitate restaurants and shops and display an everyday life with children and elders included, in a context of historic continuity, something that is absent in the total makeover design of the entire campus area, where every old fruit tree has been chopped down and replaced by new greenery with decorative purposes.

On the cultural pages of the official Asian Games website there is only one location of cultural and heritage value mentioned for the University Island and that is the 'Folk and Naturalistic Village of Guangzhou University Town'[16]. It is a new, artificial village in the

16   http://www.gz2010.cn/09/0513/14/596U568S0078003R.html

sense that the buildings displayed are structures moved to the site from outside the area, among them five temples. It is characterized as "a cultural park, a business center and a tourist resort for art galleries, bars, shopping, entertainment and hotel services". Even though it is built on the remains of an existing village called Lian Xi Cun, it is not really a renovated village representing true village life but more of an amusement park presenting the heritage as a scenic artifact.

2.2.6   NANTING CUN

Nanting Cun, one of the four remaining villages on University Island, has so far coexisted with the Art Academy in many interesting ways, as mentioned above. This has been challenged since the Asian games, where the whole village was hidden behind tall poster-covered concrete fences enclosing the village to prevent the sight of it for the guests of the cricket matches. Gated communities, *per se*, but with opposite characteristics, as this is more comparable to a prison where the people inside are to be kept enclosed than with the more typical compound, where unwanted characters are prevented from entering.

During an interview I did with the village authorities in December 2009, they said the village was to be demolished before May 2010. The site was to function as a parking lot for the cricket stadium during the games, and a Shanghai consultancy together with the US architect firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill LLP had been given the authorization to plan and conduct a rebuilding of the village, transforming it from a village with 1,200 local residents plus 1,000 temporal student residents to a 20,000-resident compound of 480,000m^2 in a park environment. The local villagers did not have much a say in this process. They had tried to argue that one old house by the village market should be kept, as a local famous writer had lived there, the great son of the village, but in the proposed plan the house was not kept. The architects had never visited the site, but planned it all from their office in Shanghai, reducing their collaboration with the village population to a written document where the local village committee presented their wishes. The local residents of the village were to be located together in the inner part of the project, allowing for expensive real estate housing facing the riverfront to be sold on the free market. The local village committee had complained about the planning proposition, not because it was too drastic, or tearing away too much of their heritage, but because they felt it was too modest, with its plans for low eight-story buildings. They wanted 30 floors to boost the area as more urban and get more profit from their share of the project. At the time of December 2009 the local population of the village had not officially been informed about the plans aiming to relocate the entire population within half a year,

only the local committee and a few others knew.

The village was not demolished before the Asian Games. Like many other villages not eradicated in the preparation phase of the games, it was instead made more attractive or less disturbing with a layer of pale yellow paint covering all the houses facing the cricket stadium. Also, all the extensions enabling small houses to function as big restaurants along the alley leading to the Art Academy were torn down. A villager I interviewed said there had been discussions among the locals if the tall fences were a security risk in case of emergency as there were very few entrances and they were far apart.
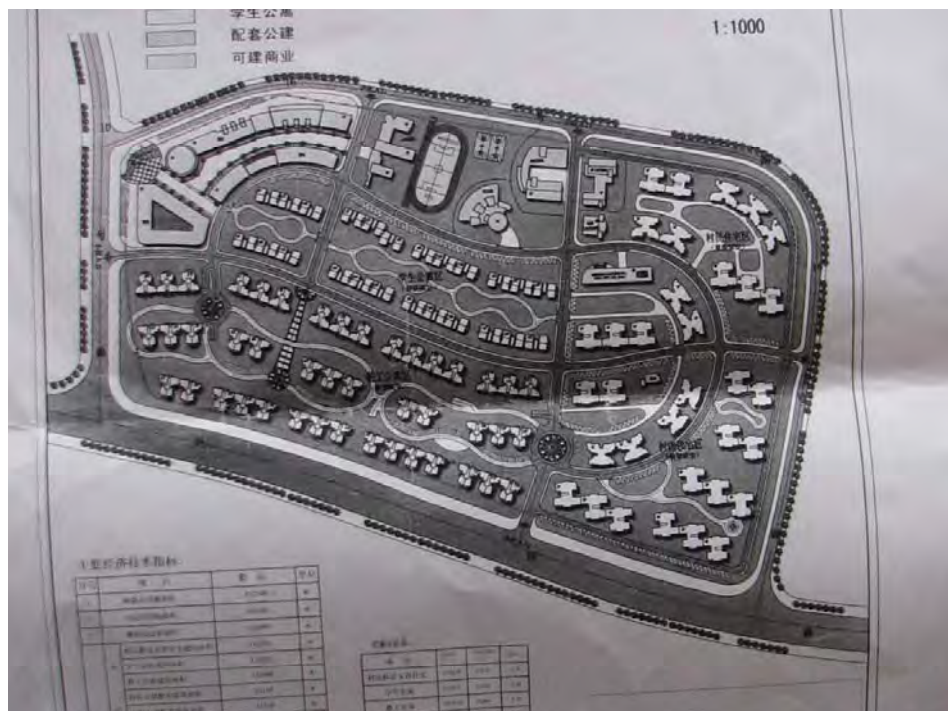
2.4   Proposed plan for Nanting Cun based on unauthorized copies.

As of October 2011, the fence still surrounds the village. The restaurants are reappearing in the street leading to the Art Academy but they struggle to survive as they first had to remove their illegal extensions before the Asian Games, and were later forced to close down during the games. For almost a year they could not reopen, and when they finally did, it was to find that their share of visitors had dropped dramatically as new restaurants had appeared in other parts of the village, and few passersby would walk behind the fence to spot their venues. Among the restaurant owners there were many different assumptions regarding the future. Some said the village would be torn down within a

2.5 Zhujiang new town main axis flanked by business- and cultural institutions. Author's photograph, 2011.

year, others hoped that just the fence would be torn down, while others again had no illusions and thought the fence would last longer than the village and stay to hinder the view of the defeated village being demolished. In the *Cases* chapter further talks and interviews in Nanting Cun are studied, looking at how people have coped and continue to cope with the changed ambience of the village.

2.2.7   PEARL RIVER NEW TOWN/ZHUJIANG NEW TOWN

The opening ceremony of the Asian Games was located at Haixinsha, a small island in Pearl River in Pearl River New Town, in Tianhe district. The new high-rise area was used as a tableau expressing the modern international image of Guangzhou. This was the first Asian Games ever where the opening ceremony had not taken place in a sports stadium, but in an open city environment. People could follow the ceremony from both sides of the river and the athletes arrived in a boat parade on the river and the invited audience was placed in a temporary arena on the small island, built only for the ceremony. Along the main axis of the site, being the main axis of Zhujiang New Town, one would see the new opera house of Zaha Hadid, completed just before the Asian Games, along with Canton Tower. It was used for the 'Olympic fire', with the torch starting the flame on the caldron through a series of fireworks, working its way to the top of the tower. Also flanking the main axis was Guangzhou International Finance Center, a 103-story, 440-meter tall, curved triangular building by Wilkinson Eyre[17] and the Pearl River Tower, an office building designed by Skidmore, Orwings and Merrill LLP. The latter was to be the first sustainable high-rise building to produce more energy than it consumed, with wind turbines and a double skin curtain wall system with solar panels[18]. They still call it a sustainable design, but avoid mentioning the energy calculations in the later presentations of the project.

Other milestone projects are located along the main axis of Zhujiang New Town, including the expressive building of Guangzhou Children's Activity Center, a 460,000m^2 cultural and educational center by Steffian Bradley Architects from UK.

When all these firms are mentioned in the text it is for the reader to understand that the urbanization of the area is not just a local project, but indeed a global project where the world-leading firms who operate in the global market are adding to the impression of a world league metropolis. This is seen both in the urban commercial center of Guangzhou and in the village projects, where very local actors like the village committees are suddenly standing side by side with the big national developers purchasing the land-use rights and collaborating with international design firms to attract global attention. These international design firms conduct very similar projects in other major cities in China, South East Asia, the Gulf and the US. When looking at their project catalogues

---

17   Pictures and info at Wilkinson Eyre web page. Available at: http://www.wilkinsoneyre.com/projects/guangzhou-international-finance-centre.aspx?category=office [Accessed: 2011-03-07]

18   Info on Pearl River Tower by designing architects SOM. Available at: http://www.som.com/content.cfm/pearl_river_tower [Accessed: 2011-03-07]

it is impossible to distinguish where their different projects are located. The ideal of what an impressive skyline is does not vary greatly in these circles, and the projects' requirements to suit the program of global trade activity within the houses are not so different from place to place.

> "SELAMAT DATING to Kuala Lumpur, city of bright, bright, bright, bright lights and tall, tall, tall, tall buildings. Rich in tradition and culture with cute, cute, cute, cute monuments and long, long, long, long shopping complexes. SELAMAT DATING to Kuala Lumpur city of big, big, big, big golf courses and cheap, cheap, cheap, cheap sales. We in Malaysia are proud of our culture and tradition with huge, huge, huge, huge airport and tall, tall, tall, tall flag pole. SELEMAT DATING to Kuala Lumpur city of 16th Commonwealth Games, where cute buildings, bright monuments, tall souvenirs, huge packing, large flag pole and long shopping complexes all line up by the red carpet to greet you. SELEMAN DATING TO YOU OUR SPECIAL GUEST." [19]

"If you love Kuala Lumpur visit Shenzhen"[20] [or Guangzhou]

2.2.8 STREET VENDORS IN THE CBD

I was not present in Guangzhou during the Asian Games, but I did visit the 'Canton fair' in 2011, where I observed that more street vendors were gathering around the cross-section of Tiyu dong lu and Tiyu nan lu than I had seen during my previous visits. This crossing is one of the biggest in the business district in Tianhe, with 16 lanes and a crew of whistling guards guiding the traffic. The pavements are wide extending to plaza proportions near the crossing, and there are usually many pedestrians walking in and out of the surrounding shopping centers. Previously the street vendors were located further down the streets near the bus stops, but in October 2011 they were trying to sell to the passersby at the pedestrian crossing. I assumed that once the Canton Fair started and lots of visitors would walk down these streets the street vendors would be gone, as I had seen the same happen outside Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology during a big international seminar at the university in 2010. I assumed the street vendors would be confronted by police or guards and would stay away for a few weeks. Every

---

19 Liew Kung Yu, in the art project 'Statements for Cities on the Move 4'. 1999, Lousiana, Denmark. Salamat Dateng is a Malay greeting, meaning 'welcome'.
20 'If you love Kuala Lumpur visit Shenzhen' was the title of a short article in the *Washington Post* by Erin Hartigan 2007. Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/artsandliving/travel/features/2007/places-you-should-go/asia_shenzhen.html [Accessed: 2011-03-08]

night at 21:00 I would thus pass by and count the number of street vendors[21]. Some of the vendors were the same every night; a man selling sweet potatoes, a woman selling hairbands, a woman selling socks, and a woman selling chestnuts. Several returned more than once during my survey. Altogether I saw 15 different street vendors at the cross section at 21:00 throughout the period. I could also see the cross section from my hotel window, so some nights I did not leave the room, but counted vendors on the pavement from my window. I started five days ahead of the fair and continued for five days into the fair, but I observed no dramatic change in the number of vendors. The variation is so small that one cannot even talk about anxiousness, although the number rose to its maximum on the fair's third day when one can assume any policy would already be enforced[22]. In the nearby backstreets, however, I noticed several new small stalls and street vendors joining in during the fair to attract the visitors without paying for a stand in the exhibition complex. Several of the stands were not selling anything but a man in a suit behind a neat desk placed on the pavement would provide business cards to passersby. For the first time since I started to annually visit this area in 2008, I also saw a stall selling clothes resembling those I have seen for sale in similar stalls in the market in Xian Cun previously, on a small plaza between two of the high-rises. It was a removable tent construction, but it was standing overnight, also during the fair. It was to me a visual sign of a new informal tendency in the 30-story office and apartment block area.

2.2.9 CONTRADICTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN THE CULTURAL PRESERVATION PROGRAM - A new era for the old man

Apart from branding the city as a modern metropolis in the Asian Games information scheme, Guangzhou also focused on its heritage, intangible and tangible. Traditional Cantonese food was branded, and the last bronzesmith in Enning road in the old central quarters of Xiguan got attention along with the restoration and rehabilitation of some of its already well-known historical sites, like Shamian Island, The Temple of Six Banyan Trees and the Chen Clan Temple in Zhangshan road, containing the Provincial Museum of Folk Arts and Crafts. Guangzhou also launched a few new historical sites to its cultural program of the Asian Games, among them the City God Temple and some streets with the traditional '*Qilou*' buildings (arcade buildings typical of the late Qing Lingnan culture).

However, in its ambitious long-term renewal plans, heritage preservation, although

---

21   Night 1: 11; night 2: 10; night 3: 11; night 4; 11; night 5: 10; night 6/Canton Fair day 1: 10; fair day 2:10; fair day 3: 12; fair day 4: 11; fair day 5: 11.

22   The policy of removing BBQ stalls was enforced during the Asian Games in Guangzhou in 2010 (Zheng 2010), and then not just during the games but 12 days prior to the games.

included for some temples and important buildings, did not make the agenda. Guangzhou will need 539 km² of available land for new buildings during the next decade to achieve its desired new development. With the speed of urban growth in Guangzhou today, the land intended for the urban expansion until 2020 will be used within the next three years according to Chen Jianhua, vice director of the city's Office of Reconstruction of Old Buildings, as of August 2010 (Qiu 2010). The local authorities therefore plan to demolish more than ten percent of the old city center's built-up areas during the next decade, along with its 138 urban villages and 200 old factory buildings. 600,000 people are estimated to be relocated in this renewal project, all according to Chen Jianhua (Cited in Qiu 2010). This relocation scheme does of course not include the migrant population found overall in most of the urban villages and also in several of the old city center areas. In *China Daily* they quote a nameless senior researcher from the ministry of Housing and Urban Rural Development who states that "more than half of the country's existing residential buildings will be demolished and rebuilt during the next two decades" (Qiu 2010), and they quote Chen Huai, director of the policy research center with the ministry, who states that "the majority of homes built before 1999 will be razed to make way for new housing because the old buildings have largely either long passed their designated lifespan or are not able to meet safety standards"(Qiu 2010). When considering the cost of construction, it is evident that the pressure on land is immense when houses no older than ten years are already considered old. This is not presented as an ambition, but as a fact of what is already going on, and expected to continue, as more than half of the country's existing residential buildings will be demolished to 'create' new land for developments on a national level over the next two decades (Qiu 2010).

2.2.10 THE CITY GOD TEMPLE

The destiny of Guangzhou's City God temple functions as a good example of how the changes in perception of civilization and modernity related to society have resulted in distinct spatial alterations, over and over again, and how a selective reuse of traditions and cultural heritage in a continuous search for modernity is something that can be traced back from today's policy to the Nationalist regime and their practice of religious preservation and abandoning.

While the old city wall was demolished in the big modernization project in the Nationalist era, the City God Temple managed to stand firm, even thought it was regarded by the government and the modern intellectuals in the 1920s as "an uncivilized space of disorder and ignorance" (Poon 2008, p. 260). With its deity images and fortune-tellers, it occupied the center of the city where the political authority should be displayed. In 1993

2.6 City God Temple set in Yuexie cultural district. Author's photographs, 2011.

it was no longer seen as a threat against modernity. It was listed as one of the Municipal Cultural Relics of Guangzhou, and according to the official news pages of Guangdong Government, they finally initiated restoration of the temple in December 2009 with the intention of completing the work before the Asian Games in 2010.

Built in 1370 as the largest Chenghuang temple of the Lingnan region, and possessing an important role as a City God Temple throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties, it became one of the ultimate targets of the Nationalists in the beginning of the 19th century. The Nationalist regime derived its legitimacy from its break with the imperial past, and since religion played a vital role in social and political control in imperial China, an important part of the new state's modernizing project became to "replace the religious culture with a new political culture…" (Poon 2008, p. 256). Thus the City God Temple, under the Nationalist regime, was refurbished to entail the Native Goods Exhibition Hall. While several hundred temples were demolished in Guangzhou during this period[23], it proved difficult to eradicate the City God Temple. Transforming the use from temple to market hall still exemplifies the policy of the time for reforming religious behavior through eradication and regulation, as well as building new monuments for a new political culture. The general population continued to use parts of the temple to praise the patron god, and thus interacted with the government's modernizing project to reformulate the urban space, to some extent, on their own premises according to Poon (2008). After the Communist takeover in 1949 the temple became a factory, and in the beginning of the 1990s it was used as a nightclub. Now it is again showcased as part of the 'historical and cultural name-card' of the city:

> "At the right time, the Guangzhou Chenghuang Temple, the Nanyue King's Palace and the Wende Road Cultural Street will all be linked up to form a historical and cultural area to be known as Yuexiu District. This new district is to be a bright spot designed to showcase the historical, folk and religious cultural features of Guangzhou, making it a new historical and cultural name-card of Guangzhou for the Asian Games." (Newsgd 2008)

I visited The City God temple in October 2011; it was drawn back from the street with a plaza that looked like it was part of the neighboring plot, and with an abstract visual language that worked to distance the temple from the street. The temple was restored with impressive murals. Most visitors I saw came to look at its beauty, rather than

---

23   According to Shuk-wan Poon, the official figures of temples in Guangzhou fell from 900 temples in 1923 to 307 in 1928 and further to 210 in 1936 (Poon 2008).

coming to pray. Next to the temple they were about to complete the new museum for the Nanyue Kingdom Palace.

When compared to the first modernizing era, certain focuses are justified and presumed to be compulsory when the urban society today again strives to modernize. The previous focus on reshaping citizens' behavior to raise the Chinese people from backwardness to modernity is again interpreted in the repetitive attacks on "… uncivilized space of disorder and ignorance…" (Poon 2008, p. 260) referring to the Nationalist regime's attacks on the "superstition" in the physical form of temples. I would argue that the urban villages in the public domain can be said to characterize the uncivilized space of disorder and ignorance within the urban fabric today.

2.3 TIANHE DISTRICT

2.7 *'A Mirage'* in Cosplayers by Cao Fei, 2004, with courtesy of the artist.

2.8 Picture showing the staging of the scene of *'A Mirage'* with courtesy of the artist.

Influenced by Japanese Manga, Cao Fei staged a series of photographs with extraordinary characters adapting to the urban landscape in several sites in Guangzhou marked by urban transformation. This photograph is taken in Tianhe, in one of its many awaiting paddy-turned-residential-plots, south of Xian Cun. The landscape of vast unused fields in-between the high-rises makes up the typical landscape of the city in transition and expansion. The vastness of the field and the illusionary effect of the polluted and dusty air bringing the urban horizon into a mirage is followed throughout the series. The tower seen in the rear of the picture is the top of CITIC Plaza.
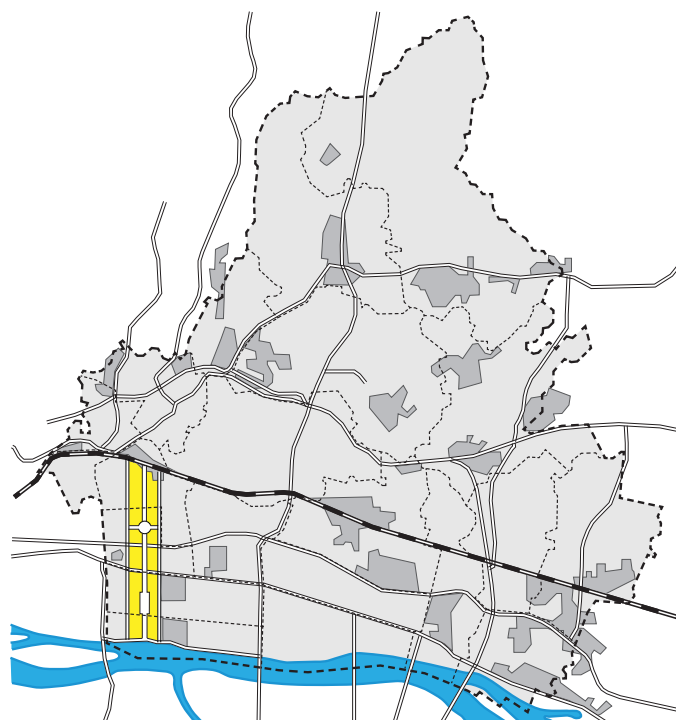
2.9   Map of Tianhe district. Darker grey areas indicate urban villages. Yellow area indicates Zhujiang new town main axis. Illustration by author.

2.3.1   THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIANHE DISTRICT

The city of Guangzhou first developed outward from the walled city to the areas south and north of the river. Expanding with important trade areas to the west of the old city center during the middle ages, and with Henan district south of the river and Dongshan District (merged into Yuexiu district in 2005) to the east, all areas have been urbanized for centuries. In the 1980s, Tianhe became an urban district for the first time. Tianhe, meaning 'river in the sky', was located by the river east of the old city center. Until then, it had hosted several important universities located on big green campuses, but apart from that, it was mostly made up of villages and paddy fields with scattered industries connected to the villages.

The district covers an area of 141 km^2, making it one of the small, central districts in Guangzhou, but with an official population density of 4,577/ km^2 as of 2006 and a *de facto* population density of more than the double when migrants staying in the district for more than six months are included [24].

The official density is four and a half times larger than the Guangzhou average.

_____

24   In this estimate they only count local residents, and as of 2006 that was 645,453 according to Tianhe's document department. For 2005 I got the numbers of local residents = 618,700 persons, while migrant workers staying in Tianhe for more than six months = 637,400 persons. The population density in Tianhe is thus in reality more than double that of the official figure.

2.3.2 TIANHE MAIN AXIS

After becoming a district, the first big public initiated project was Tianhe's sport center, completed in 1986 for the National Games. It included a big stadium, a gymnasium and a swimming stadium. For the athletes they constructed residential complexes, and the building of similar '*xiaoqu*' or small residential districts were built throughout the decade in the area south and east of the sport center, transforming the fields into residential neighborhoods. The sport center was situated in what would be the main axis of the financial and commercial center in Tianhe, and much of the important development in Tianhe district has happened in its proximity; CITIC Plaza was built to the north of the sports center, the city's main bookselling center (nine floors, 24,000m², built in 1994[25]) to the west, and the main shopping centers, Teem Plaza (shopping mall 1996) and Grandview Plaza (shopping mall 2004, with 250,000 visitors daily[26]), were constructed to the south. The residential areas from the National Games era to the south of the shopping centers have kept their housing program from the second floor upwards, but the ground floor transformed to a walkway on narrow paths between the lawns and trees and small parks to find small one-of-a-kind, trendy, exclusive or alternative shops, cafés and design studios, where the shops are located in a neighborhood still alive on a day-to-day basis with residents and visitors using the playfields, benches, trees and mahjong tables functioning as an oasis for the people tired of the hustle and bustle of the big shopping centers, or people longing for some atmosphere. For the Asian Games the entire area got fake bricks attached to the walls, slanting roofs and plastic flowers decorating the air-conditioning units.

Zhujiang New Town is the area surrounding the south end part of the main axis in Tianhe. According to Dominic Bettison, responsible for some of the most important buildings in the area (among them the West Tower and Guangzhou International Finance Center) it was all built in less than five years as a typical 'instant city', to "replace the overcrowded, gridlocked and polluted city center. It was also designed to form the centerpiece for Guangzhou hosting the Asian Games…" (Bettison 2011). Zhujiang New Town is not yet fully inhabited as of October 2011. Several of the buildings that were to be completed before the Asian Games to create the tableaux of a modern cityscape had their curtain walls or façades finalized for the games while there was still much work to be completed inside before anyone would be able to move in. The library is still not open and some of the buildings that did open are now showing signs of bad construction, maybe partly

---

25   According to: http://skyscraperpage.com/cities/?buildingID=37918 [Accessed: 2011-02-25]
26   According to factsheet available from : http://bestofguangzhou.com/shopping/grandview-mall/ [Accessed: 2011-02-25]

2.10   Tianhe main axis area. Activities around the Sports Center. Author's photographs, 2011.

because of the demand to complete without waiting for the concrete to dry. When I visited Guangdong Museum on a rainy day in October 2011, there were buckets placed around the exhibition rooms as the ceiling had signs of water damage a year after opening. For the more established areas of northern Tianhe's main axis many of the problematic qualities they apparently tried to avoid are sneaking in. Although the pavements in the district are wide, Tianhe is becoming a crowded place for instance. People may live in bigger apartments on top of each other instead of being crammed together, but with the new areas boasting complexes with an average of 30-40 floors, there are many people walking and driving in and out of the buildings every day. There are many places of work in the area and hordes of people come to visit the many shopping centers and restaurants. The metro stations in Tianhe are among the most crowded in the city, as are the roads with cars queuing for several hours in the morning and evening rush hour in the 16-lane streets.

In the early 2000s, Tianhe district already managed to attract more overseas investment than any other prefectural district in Guangdong Province (Jin 2003), and the area around the sports center is one of the main international centers of Guangzhou where many of the foreign consulates, companies and residents are located. When striving to brand the new metropolis of South China, one of Tianhe's many slogans was 'Environment is image, and efficiency is productive force'.

To create the green image Tianhe claimed to have already reached urban forestation of 50% in 2003, and many of its wide streets have impressive trees flanking the roads. The new big parks are, however, mostly fenced in and one has to pay to enter, thus, they are not used on a day-to-day level by the district's many marginalized residents having to spend several hours' earnings on a park ticket. The central axis of Zhujiang New Town is a green lane linking to new park-like promenades along the river, and for this area no payment is required. Walking there in the evenings is a staged event with lighting shows for passersby.

Below I will present some projects and sites that are important to Tianhe's urban development. These are places that represent the district's aspirations of becoming a new center of the city and also places that are used by the population of the district on a daily basis.

2.3.3 THE SPORTS CENTER

The sports center provides one of the few publically accessed green areas in this neighborhood of the city, functioning both as a neighborhood park for individuals relaxing and doing their own exercises, and for organized group activities. Cars are allowed to park in a set car park area, but the traffic is restricted, allowing for children to play. Also within the area one finds several members-only sport clubs, but apart from that, the area is open and accessible. People gather under the stairs of the stadium to practice all kinds of combat sports or meet up for classes in dance or Tai chi. Others run around the stadium, use the Ping-Pong tables under the trees or a field for a game of basketball, volleyball or tennis. There are halls for swimming and diving, bowling and billiards. On Sundays people gather to fly dragon kites on the open lawns or sip tea and play Mahjong under the trees. During my interviews in Tianhe and Xian Cun I found that the sports center is one of few public places in the district used by the locals in the urban villages of the area. It is also one of the few places where migrants and young locals said they would also hang out together, to play basketball for instance.

The main stadium of the sports center was used in the FIFA Women's World Cup in 1991 and was renovated to host the football finals of the Asian Games in 2010.

2.3.4 GUANGZHOU EAST RAILWAY STATION

The Guangzhou East Railway Station was completed in 1990 and further strengthened the position of Tianhe as the new, well-connected center of the city, situated in the far north of the main axis, north of CITIC Plaza. The main train station north-west of the old city center is still active. It has become a symbol of mass migration, handling millions of ordinary passengers travelling from all over China to the many production areas in the delta. The railway station in Tianhe was one of the symbols of a new efficient finance-oriented era with a different kind of "floating population" (Siu 2005, p. 12) as it gave the travelers plenty of space and offered VIP lounges, but has now been surpassed by the South Railway Station handling the new high speed trains highlighting the futuristic expression and feeling of efficiency. The East Railway Station is in charge of the direct lines to Shenzhen and Hong Kong, with bullet trains leaving every ten to 20 minutes to Shenzhen. They also provide trains to mainland destinations like Xiamen, and connect Hong Kong and Beijing. The train station is reached via metro line 1 and 3 and has direct shuttle busses to Baiyun airport. It is one of the main infrastructural points making Tianhe a city center of its own, less and less dependent on the old city center. This development is further supported by the city authorities' policy of moving many important institutions from the old city center to the main axis of Tianhe. Most of the migrants I have talked to in Xian Cun have never been to this train station, and they seldom use the metro system.

They tend to use the buses for intercity transport and leave the city from either the old main train station or the many bus services.

2.3.5 CITIC PLAZA

The development of the financial district in Tianhe achieved another important milestone in 1997 when the 80 floors of CITIC Plaza were completed. It was the world's tallest building for a year, though it is now dwarfed by several buildings in both China and other Asian countries. It is still an attractive address used by consulates and foreign offices, with its location at the head of the main axis of Tianhe, with the mountains in the background and the river in front and overlooking the newly renovated Tianhe sports park in the south.

2.3.6 SWITCH IN THE CULTURAL SCENE

While private enterprises open new big cinemas in malls in districts like Tianhe, the authorities close down the many small public cinemas in the city. In the article *'Guangzhou old cinemas go with the tide',* Gao and Keyton (2010) list 14 public cinemas in Guangzhou, all closed down, reducing the accessibility and affordability of cultural input for the people in the old city center. They mention how the public cinemas would charge up to 0.3 CNY for a ticket in the '90s while the private cinemas that have replaced the public cinemas now charge between 50 and 100 CNY. They provide surround sound and upholstered seats and reach out to a completely different audience. One ticket is far more expensive than a day's salary for the average migrant in Guangzhou. In Xian Cun they provide a big screen broadcasting CCTV channel 1 all day long outside the new shopping street in the village.

The effect of closing down cultural institutions in the old city center is strengthened with the trend for the city authorities to move their public institutions to new areas of urban transformation to boost the area and attract more developers to increase the value of the land, and hence their own profits of the authority-led development. One example of the new cultural institutions in Tianhe is the main library. It was formerly situated in the old city center, but in 2010 it pre-opened the new main floor during the Asian Games in Zhujiang New Town's cultural zone, together with the new Western Opera House and the Children's Cultural Center and the new Guangdong Museum. As this moved these influential institutions closer to the urban villages I have investigated, it is part of a trend that ultimately envisages the area without the urban villages and the migrant population. This trend is therefore favoring the rich and successful inhabitants of the city with regards to accessibility to public benefits.

2.11 Old and new main library. Author's photographs, 2011.

2.3.7 NEW MAIN LIBRARY

The new library, designed by the Japanese architect company Nikken Sekkei LTD, is six times larger than the old main library in the city center. Unlike other main libraries in China, people will be able to get direct access to most of the books displayed in open shelves, described by the planning architects as "like a huge department store of books and media"[27].

Of course this move will be part of enlarging the cultural scene of Tianhe and improving the access to cultural expressions for the local population in the Tianhe area. The new institution's layout will also display and presumably offer more open access to cultural expressions and knowledge for some, but at the same time this practice is part of draining

---

27   As of the text in 'Open buildings'. Available at: http://www.openbuildings.com/buildings/guangzhou-new-library-profile-4727.html [Accessed: 2011-03-01]

the cultural scene from the old city center where the important institutions are being removed.

The difference between the service of a bookshop and of a library is somehow different from what I have observed in Tianhe compared to what I experience in Norway for instance. The big bookstore in the main plaza of Tianhe had several stories full of books placed in shelves that functioned as reading units for the 'customers'. Many books for sale bear witness to being carefully read. Some migrants in Xian Cun said they would frequent the big book store though none of my interviewees said they would regularly visit the old main library in the city center. As accounted for in the introduction to the *Cases* chapter, Xian Cun had book-lending shops functioning as a cheap way to borrow books for the migrant population not allowed to get books in the city's library due to their hukou status.

2.3.8 TIMES MUSEUM

As very different urban initiatives one can compare the cultural spaces emerging in the central CBD (the Opera House and library mentioned above) with that of the Times Museum. The cultural institutions in the CBD surround the big axis and relate to the urban surroundings in a formal way where the residents operate as anonymous visitors. In the Times Museum they relate to residents as neighbors. In a typical commercially developed residential block in northern Guangzhou, the Times Museum has been interwoven. You reach it via Huangbian metro station on line 2. It is situated in an area still under development, with construction sites, fields and industrial areas still present within an ambience of increasing urban development. The metro line was completed in 2010 and the museum opened in October 2010 right across the street from metro entrance D. The museum has a direct entrance on the ground floor, as a regular shop in a typical residential block. On the ground floor there is a reception and space for exhibition projects and presentations, with an internal elevator stopping in the middle floor for the offices and management of the museum and on the top floor for exhibition and project spaces. All the museum spaces have windows that allow the surroundings to play a part in the perception of the situation and enable the visitor to get a glimpse of a life otherwise hidden behind the fences of the compound. From the ground floor there are floor to ceiling windows opening up to both the street outside and the backyard garden with grandmothers strolling around the lanes between lawns, flowerbeds and ponds. From the exhibition spaces of the top floor, one can both grasp the big landscape and look into the private balconies in the apartments below. It is a structure that comments on and finds itself acting as the merge between the introvert and extrovert images

and characters of the residential block. It is a result of the curatorial concepts from the second Guangzhou Triennial at Guangdong Museum of Art in 2005 titled '*Beyond: an Extraordinary Space of Experimentation for Modernization*'. The joint organization of the museum and the residential block explores the relations between the exhibition and the city. The location and ways to establish relations with the surroundings becomes a tool for dealing with artistic production and communicating the exhibitions, fostering discussions on context and urban development. In the triennial catalogue they express how one can think of the implementation based on the "'beyondness' of contemporary life and culture in the Pearl River Delta, […] to penetrate into the details of life in the region through investigation and study as well as a corresponding and highly productive 'expression'" (Huangsheng 2005, p. 13). The Times Museum was designed by Rem Koolhaas and Alan Fouraux. As an interesting comment on how to interact with the transforming urban fabric, this project represents an exception, but the city provides several of these relational instances, where different urban typologies meet and merge, some of them intended, others being results of informal initiatives.

In the *Theory* chapter I account for how Margaret Crawford criticizes Rem Koolhaas and his Post Urbanism approach in general (not this specific project) for producing a sensation of defamiliarization when making ordinary experiences "strange". This she sees as contrary to what she represents with the Everyday Urbanism approach trying to refamiliarize the ordinary experiences. I think the Times Museum is interesting in this discussion as it is alien to introduce a museum to a residential neighborhood, but in a much stronger sense than placing cultural institutions in a CBD one sees the potential for establishing 'refamiliarizing' relations to the institution once it has merged in such a practical and concrete manner with an urban residential ambience, taking part as an arena for everyday life for the surrounding residents.

2.12   Times museum. Author's photographs, 2011.

2.13   Completed house set by the window in Tianhe neighborhood. Author's photograph, 2008.

2.3.9 SIDELINE: GINGERBREAD HOUSE PROJECT

Tianhe is a district that has many layers of trade, from the very local to the very global. Later I will write about the effects of the activities in the urban villages on its surrounding urban districts, but through this little story I want to illustrate how the global or multicultural aspects can be seen influencing the commercial environment of Tianhe. As mentioned earlier, Tianhe was a rural district with villages and university campuses until 25 years ago, when the rapid urbanization of the district began. Until then, single-story farmers' houses were among the most common in the area. A typical Swedish cottage gingerbread house would not feel too different from its surrounding buildings. Since then, Tianhe has made records in heights and massiveness, both in the general urban fabric and within the villages, and a typical Swedish 'Röda stugan/red cottage' gingerbread house of the countryside is far off track in the most urban of urban sky-rise neighborhoods.

During my fieldwork in Guangzhou in 2008 I stayed in the city during late fall/early winter, returning home to Norway on 23rd December. When Christmas was approaching, the malls and receptions in Tianhe started their decorations with big plastic trees and glittering and colorful presents were put on display. I came across a box of a ready to assemble gingerbread house in IKEA. Within walking distance from my rented hotel-apartment in Guangzhou, located in a 30-story housing compound, I could find everything I needed to put the gingerbread house together, with all kinds of typical sweets (see map on opposite page).

The gingerbread house was bought in IKEA. It is situated right behind the CITIC Plaza, along the park leading up to Guangzhou East Railway Station. It was opened in 2005, and had an impressive food stall at its entrance, much bigger and with wider selections than I am used to from IKEA in Norway. They sold '*tomtebrygg*' (Swedish Christmas beer), and even Swedish Vodka along with a big variety of cheeses, salmon and Pepparkakor/ Swedish ginger cookies, some with biodynamic ingredients. I just happened to walk past the shop one evening and seeing so many people at the entrance, it made me walk in to have a look what was going on, and it turned out they had just put all their Christmas foods on the shelves, and that was why there were so many people.

As everyone who has bought an assembly house like this knows, you need something, usually burnt sugar, to assemble the walls and roofs, and then something else, usually icing sugar, to hide the joints and attach the sweets to the house. In the humid and hot climate of Guangzhou, the melted sugar joints quickly turned soft again, and the house did not stand tall for long, but we invited architecture students to come and eat it the very same day, so it was no practical problem for us.

The caster sugar for the joints could be bought in many places within Tianhe as it is used as a regular spice in Chinese food. The icing sugar, however, was much harder to get hold of. I searched first in all the big international grocery stores in the neighborhood like the Hong Kong based Park'n Shop and Japanese Jusco[28]. When I had no success in the big grocery stores I tried Corner's Deli, a small international grocery shop, with four branches in the city, one of which in a back alley in Tianhe, where I came out with most of the other things I needed but no icing sugar. Everywhere provided cake mixes with

---

28   If I had done this again now I could have visited more shops, as the international grocery market is booming in Guangzhou, with more and more shops. A list of foreign groceries in Guangzhou listing French, German, New Zealand, Korean and Japanese shops in Tianhe is available at: http://special. lifeofguangzhou.com/2010/node_971/127053532175614.shtml [Accessed: 2011-03-02]

glazing included, but not pure icing sugar. I finally found it in the basement of CITIC Plaza, where they also have a Corner's Deli.

In the back alley of the busy main streets of the business district of Tianhe, close to the international school, lies the first Corner's Deli I visited. It is located in the middle of the street, not on the corner, next to an expensive children's clothes shop and an apartment advertisement shop. Somehow it has the appearance of a cozy neighborhood grocery store with wooden shelves displaying a wide selection of overseas products, a few of each item. But as it maybe appears local, it is both regional and global. Its clients are mainly foreigners coming from all over the city, many working in the business district or picking up children at the international school nearby. It specializes in products from Hong Kong, Australia and the US, but also with special products from Korea, Japan, France and Italy, with an impressive selection of cereals, sweets, dairy products and a large wine department.

The staff all speak English. This is just one type of trade among a wide variety of businesses popping up near the international school. Among them, many local initiatives and small stalls originated in the nearby villages. For instance a woman has a stall on the pavement next to the entrance of the school where she sells hair ties and arm-bibs for children, and also several fruit sellers come with their wagons to serve the grandparents who come to pick up their children after school with a treat. In the same area you can find small 'local' restaurants, for instance a French restaurant run by a Vietnamese cook who used to work in Paris and who sells a French roast coffee grown on the Chinese plain to foreign businessmen from all over the world.

The Corner's Deli was one of the shops I saw recommended on the internet on a page where newly arrived foreign housewives asked each other for advice on where to buy food, clothes or find the nearest golf course. When advice was given, the telephone number was added for the foreigner to let the taxi driver call the shop to get directions. This tells something of the scale of the area where these foreigners operate to fulfill their desired lives within the city, and what spatial context this seemingly local grocery store operates within.

In the small shop there was a baking department, mostly specializing in shortcuts, with packets of "just add one cup of water and stir" cake mixes, and they had for instance no such thing as regular flour, but they did have self-raising flour. As mentioned above they did not have icing sugar, but they could provide different readymade cake glazes.

In the shop I bought half a kilo of an Australian brand caster sugar. I also bought sweets for the decoration of the gingerbread house; red and white candy sticks called polkagris, a typical old-fashioned Swedish mint sweet invented in 1859 in Gränna, Sweden[29] but becoming popular in US later that same century and now figuring as old-fashioned sweets all over the Western world. My version was produced more recently, in Japan. Also I bought American Jelly Belly sweets and colorful Korean chocolates.

2009

One year later when I came back to China I brought with me another gingerbread house assembly set, bought in my own neighborhood grocery shop in Bergen, Norway. I gave it to the inhabitants of the *House Rent Project* apartment in the urban village of Shigangxi Cun together with a packet of caster sugar to melt for the glue and a packet of icing sugar to glue on all the sweets. I also brought a lot of typical Norwegian sweets for the decoration; jelly figures resembling men in perfect gingerbread house scale and other chocolate figures. I spent some time telling them how to put it together, and as they had a little daughter, and it was still not Christmas, I thought they would enjoy an evening puzzling over putting it all together before enjoying the feast of eating it all. I imagined it could be a good opportunity for them to talk about their hometowns and share stories of what home meant for them in their hometowns and in the urban village. That was not in their interests, and they later told me they skipped the time-consuming assembling, and ate it all in its constructional components in one go.

2010

In Bergen, Norway, every year there is a display of 'Pepperkakebyen' or the gingerbread house city, the biggest gathering of gingerbread houses in the world. Kindergartens and all school children under 12 are welcome to contribute with their own homemade gingerbread house, while a lot of corporations and businesses also contribute. All the buildings are put together to create a city, with parks and streets and ports and small neighborhoods. There are gingerbread churches, gingerbread supply boats, gingerbread football stadiums… They put up a temporary building to host the entire gingerbread city, and they charge all adults to enter, while all children enter for free. After Christmas they host an auction on all the houses and the money raised goes to charity.

I did not join the construction team, but I made my own attempt of making a typical Chinese urban village house in my kitchen, to see how it interacted with the surrounding neighborhood, through the windows, just like I had done with the IKEA house in

---

29   Available at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polkagris. [Accessed: 2011-03-02]

Guangzhou two years earlier. I made a six-story house with a shop on the ground floor and with small rentable apartments for migrant residents with balconies facing the street and with a roof terrace on top. Its open plan first floor put some strain on the badly constructed house, and it bent from its own weight, and fell apart on the kitchen floor just a few hours after I had assembled it. I used that opportunity to bring in my son's construction site vehicles to clean up the mess in an urban village demolition-like setting.

Of course, if this attempt was to find a new form of a dream-home that would really sell at the local IKEA in Guangzhou, my urban village house would not fulfill the task for the wider audience, however, the 'traditional' IKEA gingerbread house sells not because it represents their dream of a home, but because it represents something exotic and folkloristic. It is specific in the form of a foreign tradition and something general and global in the form of Christmas decorations, for a population not necessarily believing in Christ being born. To the Chinese clients I do not think it really matters if it is a Swedish cottage. The gingerbread house is just as much a representation of the general Western culture or the American culture with its Disney Christmas cartoons. The gingerbread tradition has always wandered, coming from Armenia to Western Europe more than a thousand years ago, developing into the hard German type that was suitable for making biscuits and decorating figures several centuries later. The origin of the gingerbread house is disputable but many say it is a German tradition that was inspired by the fairy tale of Hansel and Gretel by the Grimm brothers, first published in 1812. The house that seems so tempting hosts an evil witch.

2.14   Urban village Gingerbread house under demolition. Author's photograph, 2010.

2.4 RURAL-URBAN DIVIDES: CITY/DISTRICT/VILLAGE

Traditionally, Chinese market cities like Guangzhou have been "...dynamic, cultural, economic and political spaces linking country to city" (Siu 2007, p. 330). This tradition has been severely challenged by the hukou and tenure systems dividing the urban and rural communities within the expanding cities since the second part of the last century. Through the urban expansion and encapsulating of rural entities in the form of urban villages, and the differentiation between urban and rural residents within the cities, the border between rural and urban has moved within the city itself.

Even when focusing on the urban development in Tianhe during the 90s with new high-rises and urban grids, we must not forget that Tianhe was still not so much a downtown area as it was a big construction site surrounded by paddy fields. It was not an established urban district, but a grid of streets where one tall building after another was completed throughout the fields. In-between the new wide, vast, urban grid, old villages and new high-rise residential neighborhoods stood side by side with plenty of transitional spaces of fields not yet having made their final urban jump. The villages were still part of the skyline, and it was visual contact between the villages situated less than a kilometer apart; Shipai, Xian Cun, Liede, Wuyang Cun, Jiazi Cun, Yangjicun etc. The villages were in a transitional phase of replacing old built structures of one or two floors with taller buildings of four to seven floors. The old buildings varied in style, but were often patio-like homes built up of several volumes. The new buildings in the villages were extending to the neighboring plots above the narrow lanes to build up an extremely dense urban structure.

The towers of the city rising to the sky in-between the villages were also varied, some looking like they wanted to build on a historical past, from The Bund of last centuries' overseas trade, while others were completed in steel and glass and looking to the future. American, Japanese and European architects mark the new urban attitude with their contributions. There are many ways to illustrate this ambience of a paddy field growing up to become the commercial center of a mega city with global aspirations. You might want to take another look at Cao Fei's *'A Mirage'* at the front of this chapter or look at Weng Fen's *'On the wall'* series with pictures from Shenzhen and Guangzhou among others. The villagers were still growing vegetables in their traditional way in-between the bulldozers and construction sites. For instance, I did an interview in Xian Cun with two old local ladies from the Lu family who had been farmers all their lives. They told me they had kept growing vegetables around their village until 1998. At present they did not

grow anything anymore, but lived off their houses, which they rented out to migrants. While they grew vegetables, their district became a well-established commercial center of the city, and the tallest building in the world could be seen from their field. In 2005 the district population count indicates that there were 618,700 local residents and 637,400 migrant residents within Tianhe. This shows that there are slightly more migrant residents than local residents, all entering the village and high-rise landscape of '*the river in the sky*', during a couple of exhausting decades.

In 2008 the Guangzhou authorities announced that by the end of 2009 they would include all the 1146 villages (not only urban villages) in a planning scheme, aiming to reach their goal of "every village planned". Both the reconstruction and planning of the urban villages were to be conducted within the urban construction planning and management system and would be grouped with the short-term construction planning in the future. Until then, many of the villages had been blank spots on the urban map. As reported to the authorities, they prepared to handle the villages "… in accordance with the principles of reconstructing villages-in-the-city, cancelling and merging small villages, dismantling hollow villages, and reducing natural villages"(Yan 2008). South China University of Science and Technology had been assigned to conduct some of these village plans. During a visit there in 2008 I was shown examples of how each of these different categories were handled. Qualities were mapped. In some cases they would indicate where to reduce the village, or where to extend the village, and in the cases of new possible constructions, they would propose a visual language for the new structures. For rural villages with architectonic qualities they even proposed solutions for beautifying the villages with heritage look-a-like fences, indicating style for new buildings and proposing to extend existing plazas.

In 2002 Guangzhou had 138 urban villages occupying about 22.67% of the municipal area according to Siu (2005, p. 7). The number of urban villages did not change until 2007 when Liede, the first urban village, was 'reconstructed', or in other words demolished.

The villages around the commercial and financial center of Tianhe mostly host migrant residents working in the service industry of the district. They work in the shops, restaurants, hotels and offices in the CBD. I interviewed the staff in one of the small hotels in a high-rise building in Tianhe. The hotel was attracting international clients with their English speaking receptionists. The male staff were provided with a small apartment in Xian Cun to share, while the female staff were given an apartment to share in the same building as the hotel. The manager argued that the girls would find it scary and perhaps dangerous to walk into the village after late night shifts, while they found

it was not a threat to the male staff. The male staff, however, although migrant, all had university-level education and did not want to be associated with the village and its poor life. They complained about the standard of the apartment with bad air and noise from the streets, and they made it a point in their conversation that they only went to the village to sleep, while they spent their spare time with friends in other parts of the city.

Tianhe is a place where civilizations clash together; an agrarian civilization with clan-led local communities becoming 'streets' in an urban district competing in the world's league of emerging mega cities, with the paddy-field and the global trade all within walking distance from each other. It is interesting to question how the overall urban transformation is affecting the lives of people in the district, how the changes in the city affect the transformation of the urban villages and how the changes in the villages affect the surrounding transformation of the city. I will discuss these issues further in the coming chapters.

2.4.1 LIEDE

In the original plan proposed for Zhujiang new town in 1992, in the competition proposal won by the American consultants Carol Thomas Planning Consultancy, Liede, one of the urban villages in the area, was proposed to be kept as a small-scale neighborhood within the new high-rise structures. Liede was regarded as more idyllic and pedestrian-friendly than the other villages, as it flanked the feed-in rivers of the Pearl River, with nice bridges, trees and local ambience providing several authentic traditional characteristics of the village. It was not as densely built for migrant renters as Xian Cun or Shipai. Its future was debated, as it held an important location in the new plan of the new business district. An important bridge connecting Tianhe to the ring road was later planned right through the village, and in November 2007, the urban village of Liede was demolished as the first out of the five urban villages in the area intended to be "reconstructed". Later the plan was extended to nine urban villages in the area intended for demolition before the Asian Games. With one month's notice the demolition work started. The timing was influenced by the notion that the released land should be available for new development before the expected drop in prices after the Beijing Olympics, and also before the celebrations of the 60-year anniversary of the People`s Republic on 1st October 2009, all to limit the possible tensions in 2009 according to my contributors. The ancestral temples from the village have been dismantled, moved and reconstructed in a park-like atmosphere near the river, next to the new highway bridge in the former Liede village. The two sides are interlinked with a walkway under the bridge, on top of the river. The river is kept open and as of October 2011 a row of old-looking yet newly constructed brick houses are

2.15 Liede, 2009. With courtesy of Malte Lech.

about to be completed on both sides of the river. These houses will host restaurants, shops and tea houses. The area flanking the river is no longer called Liede village, but 'Hunter Lane'. Details on wooden frames and the stone fence along the river display old motifs, but the same pattern is repeated and repeated for each and every house, and although it provides a different scale and style to the surrounding new residential compounds, it lacks the richness in expression that elements from the old village could display. When I visited in October 2011 only one tea house was open while the other houses were still awaiting completion.

In Xian Cun, the neighboring village, I interviewed several people from Liede who had moved to Xian Cun because their homes were torn down. One of them said Xian Cun had received 2,000 inhabitants from Liede during the demolition period, though this cannot be verified, as the Renting House Management Service Center in Xian Cun said they did not register where people moving to Xian Cun came from, they only knew that people from Liede had moved to several villages within Guangzhou, one of them being Xian Cun. Both the local residents and the migrant residents from Liede moved to the nearby villages. The local villagers tended to temporarily find relatives or friends in the neighboring villages to move in with, while the migrant residents considered job opportunities first when selecting their next place of habitation; however, often helped by their kinship network in other villages, according to my interviewees.

January 22, 2008, the dragon boat of the village, 'Flower Dragon', a 40-meter and four-ton wooden boat was carried out of the village by more than 100 local villagers to its final destination in the new Guangdong Provincial Museum on the main axis of Zhujiang New Town. It was lifted up to the fourth floor, to the historic and cultural hall of the museum, located just 400 meters from Liede village (Chu 2008). In the exhibition they talk of the tradition of the dragon boats in general but do not mention that the boat originates from a village one could see from the windows of the museum had it not been torn down. The dragon boats are displayed in the section focusing on various aspects of the Lingnan culture and in this respect the exhibition has chosen not to relate to the history of transformation of the area where the museum is located but rather to put a distance to the concrete situation of heritage and to abstract the story of urban development.

I have chosen to write about Liede in the *Context* chapter as it is not a village I have followed in my research. It functions here as an example of how the urban villages relate to urban transformation. For further reading on Xian Cun and Shipai in Tianhe and the other villages I have looked at in this research, see the *Cases* chapter.

2.16   Hunter Lane. Former Liede, 2011. Author's photograph, 2011.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTION AND ANALYSIS

3.0.1 THEORETICAL POSITION

Assuming that there is no point of departure as we have always been traveling in non-linear and dynamic ways, this colors the questioning in this text of what urban transformation is, what role the migrants take in this process and how the migrants situate themselves within the multi-scalar locality.

In this chapter I will look at theoretical conceptions around perceptions of and relations to space. The writings I build upon are concerned with communication, the nature of subjectivity and diversity in relation to experiences of space and place. They represent various disciplines; philosophy, sociology, geography, anthropology, political science, urban planning, architecture and art. They have had varying impacts on the final argumentation, but those included here have all in some way been relevant in shaping the understanding and argumentation of the thesis, in being influential, inspiring, thought-provoking or explanatory of the diffuse and complex ambience of the Chinese urban realm, the spatial and social aspects of the urban villages and the broader positioning of the migrant population.

As an overall perspective, the main preferences used can all be said to be within poststructuralist thinking, in the sense that they represent a reaction to the structuralist approach with its culturally independent meaning and search for new authoritative interpretations. Poststructuralists typically view culture as inseparable from meaning[1] and tend to take a decentralizing, non-authoritative approach. However, to label these writers as poststructuralist is in many ways insufficient, as it is a labeling created by American academics for a group of radical French left-wing academics from the late '60s. It is not a term originating from a core knowledge agreed among the writers, given that the common features are primarily that of a strong reaction towards structuralism and "a rejection against definitions that claim to have discovered absolute truths or facts about the world" (New World Encyclopedia). In their angle of approach they do not solely attempt to understand the objects, but just as much the system wherein the object is produced, and in that sense they emphasize the "study of how knowledge is produced, working without a unified core position or manifest"[2].

---

1   Main source on this paragraph on Post-structuralism. Casey. 1997 and New World Encyclopedia: http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Post-structuralism [downloaded 2011.06.24] The sentences/words in brackets are quotes from the latter text.
2   Poststructuralism can be seen in close relation to post-modernity, but not to the aesthetic post-modernism reacting to the aesthetic modernism.

Poststructuralism is a term that is used less and less. I personally have no interest in grounding my theoretical positions within any pre-fixed theoretical conception, neither to refer to the ideas of the writers I build on as poststructuralist, or to put their ideas into a scheme of theoretical history based on 'isms', but as Deleuze, Derrida, Foucault and Serres are all writers who are defined by others as poststructuralists, it should be mentioned. The main importance for me in building on their ideas is their shared interest in perceptions of the subjects' relation to their surroundings, the subjective positioning and the focus on multifaceted interpretations. The important similarity is not that these approaches could be named poststructuralist, but that they all take part in rediscovering the importance of place, with a focus that elaborates how place is not a fixed thing or a definite structure to be defined, but rather allows one to look into a place at work, which is ongoing and dynamic, and elaborate on perceptions of the subject of place. I follow them in their interpretation of an inclusive notion of place that goes beyond the confined place as a spatial container. Place is here seen as including the abstract parameters of extension and dimension but also sensible qualities, relating to corporeal movements.

I wish to perceive place similar to Casey when he state that place is more "an event than an entity" (Casey 1997, p. 339). This perception of place also affects the interpretation of space. When not seen as homogeneous and infinite, but rather as heterogeneous and open, this requires space to be experienced as "emplaced" (Casey 1998). This will be further elaborated throughout this chapter when referring to the works of Deleuze, Guattari and Serres in general terms and when discussing Jacka on the Chinese migrant situation in particular. Also, it will be addressed in the *Methodology* chapter when discussing the narrative approach.

Critique of poststructuralist relation to power and capital

While Descarte famously said "I think, therefore I am", Bray (2011) interprets the poststructuralist idea as "I think, therefore I am being thought" (Bray 2011).

According to Read (2010) the heaviest critique on poststructuralism was given by Marxists during the 1980s and 1990s when "Marxists were accused of being too wedded to totality, teleology, and economic determinism [by the poststructuralists], while poststructuralists were accused of forgetting history, agency, and replacing politics with the play of language [by the Marxists]" (Read 2010).

In a review of Choat's book '*Marx through Post-Structuralism: Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze*' (2010), Read (2010) refers to Simon Choat as pointing to the place where

Marxists and poststructuralists meet when he analyses the works of poststructuralists in regard to their dealing with Marx, analyzing capital and how to grasp the present in terms of its forces and conflicts (Read 2010). For Foucault and Deleuze that is in the field of framing conflict encountered as being between power and resistance, but on the contrary to the Marxist perspective, the poststructuralist approach is a "dehistorized encounter emphasizing on body and desire as point of resistance" (Read 2010). According to Read, Choat concludes that the poststructuralist rejection of the Marxist dialectic in regard to its dualistic logic of conflict, reduced to that between the two classes, workers and capitalists, is an error repeated in their own concepts. Read sees this in Deleuze's case, when he uses the concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to analyze capitalism (Read 2010). However, in Choat's meaning these and other typical poststructuralist concepts are "incredibly useful for analyzing capital, for augmenting Marx's critical project, even if the conceptual logic presents them in the form of a static, and even ahistorical, opposition between life and the forces that would control it" (Read 2010).

Like Choat, I see the usefulness in the terms of the poststructuralists I refer to and the way they handle open systems. This can be used when discussing the complexity of the transforming situation of urban China, the role of the urban village and the role of the migrants within the urban environment. Like poststructuralists, I reject the dual focus and try my best not to invent new dualities when discussing the spatial positioning and subjective situatedness in relation to the urban villages by the migrant population.

3.0.2 SIDELINE: COMPARING TWO WAYS OF MAKING DUMPLINGS

One day I made dumplings together with a group of Chinese and Tibetan colleagues from our university. I experienced the following distinction in dumpling making: the Tibetan man practiced a very precise process, with each finger knowing their move and where to put the pressure to create a two-hands-folded form of dumpling. One act for one bite with one force, shaking hands in praise to constitute a singular amorphous identity (see illustration below). This was showed in stark contrast to the crafted process or work done to make the same dumplings by the young Chinese women present. They had a very different technique with repeated movements of folding dough to create a refined object. The interesting thing is that they both start out the same, with the same dough and the same filling, they take about the same time to make and the first phase of the process is the same; rolling small balls that are then flattened into a plate with a raised center. The final results of the two different methods were similar in size and taste, but

the texture became very different and they were also very different in perception; the first a three-dimensional form showing the hollow of two hands, pointy and rounded at the same time, the second a fan-like shape. If the first is a subject, so the other is an object, a type/a pattern. This example of how the same matter can be handled so differently can help us understand the difference in the production of 'smooth space' and the production of 'striated space' in the next paragraph.

When I looked closer into the dumpling making traditions of Tibetan and Cantonese culture, I found that the Tibetans had just as many examples of the latter, more processed pattern-making dumplings. The distinction of the traditions among the Tibetan and the Cantonese/Chinese, or the 'nomad' and the 'state' can thus not be site-specifically read out of this example, as the opposite practice can probably be found integrated in both cultures. On a behavioral level though, this specific example can function as a clear example of Deleuze and Guattari's ideas.

Furthermore it functions as an example of the distinction between using 'tools' and 'force' as another aspect in Deleuze and Guattari's argument of place-making practices. The praised hands-open process relates later to Sennett's thoughts of minimum force and to working well with obstacles. Pointing to the whole process of where to make the dough thin, where to put the thumb, how much force to use and so forth is related to this idea of balance between strain, force and result. If too much force is used in the pressure, the liquid will be squeezed out or the dough will get too thin in some areas and the contents can drip out, but if too little force is used, the joints will not be sealed and the content will also slip out. If the fingers are positioned wrongly the same result happens so the joints will not be sealed and the contents will escape when boiling.

3.1   Making dumplings. Author's photographs, 2011.

3.0.3 PLACE-FACE

I have divided the theoretical chapter into two parts, in each part traversing from the abstract and general to the concrete aspects of the situation in question, to illustrate how the ideas are described and how they are used within the context of this topic. The analysis functions as a red thread throughout this second part of the text, and is embedded as a major part in this theoretical chapter.

- The first part of this chapter will look at the subject of place, mainly addressing the physical ambience and place at work within the city and the urban village.
- The second part will focus on the subjects in place or the individual agencies, migrant actions and migrants as situated subjects.

The two parts have a shared focus in respect to addressing relations in space as subjective positionings and situatedness in place. The ideas from one part also address the aspects of the other part, so this dividing is not a stringent division indicating that for instance Deleuze and Guattari are involved in space and place but not in individual agencies or that Serres is involved in individual agencies and not in space and place. To account for their ideas within a broader perspective I also refer to their ideas of subjects in place for the writers in the first part of this chapter, and to the thinkers' ideas related to subjects of place in the second part. I see their contributions as interesting because their thinking traverses this distinction in scale and scope.

I will start the first part of this chapter by presenting aspects of the thoughts from '*A Thousand Plateaus*' by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and I will start the second part with '*The Parasite'* by Michel Serres. Both of these books were originally published in French in 1980. The theoretical concepts within these two books have influenced me in a fundamental way, and their ideas and terms are referred to throughout; smooth space/striated space/hollow space, nomad/migrant, mobility, fixed, interiority/exteriority, interference/interruption/disturbance, direction/relation. These writers have also influenced each other's writing, and refer to each other's works. Both books can be seen as evaluating complex and fluid and interrupted relations in a stance over fixed form, in regard to perceiving dynamics in society and interlinked relations. They function to describe movement and relations within diverse scales, on both the society level and on the individual level. When accounting for their approach, I have tried to grasp an understanding of the dynamic relations that take part in shaping the transformation of the urban ambience for the people concerned. I am interested in how the places allow for different degrees of 'situatedness' and thus facilitate different agencies of inter-relations among the actors of society.

3.1 PLACE AT WORK

Here the focus is on *place*, not as a fixed thing, but questioning place at work, looking at the dynamics and relations within the subject of place. I will start with the terms 'nomad space' and 'smooth/striated space' by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1980), and continue with 'arrival city' by Doug Saunders (2010), 'everyday urbanism' by Margaret Crawford (Mehrotra 2005) and 'kinetic city' or 'elastic urban conditions' by Rahul Mehrotra (2010)and include a short brief of 'liminal space' by Victor W. Turner (1967).

3.1.1   MIGRANTS AS NOMADS NEGOTIATING SMOOTH SPACE

China with its empires and plains with physical and mental walls dividing the exteriority from the interiority of the state throughout history, its dual configuration is now represented in the urban-rural divide. How to operate as a nomad within the interiority, when the concept of exteriority is so fully expressed and conceptualized within political, societal and cultural constructions? It is unavoidable to talk of the rural-urban movers in China as migrants, but in this chapter I will talk about their agency as nomadic deterritorialization, building on the thoughts of 'Nomadeology' by Deleuze and Guattari. Urban migrants will here be seen as doubling with an accompanying nomad, opening the perception of the exteriority that this migrant-nomad operates within, also when relating to an interiority.

For the nomad "there is an extraordinarily fine topology that relies not on points or objects but rather on haecceities, on sets of relations (winds, undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the cracking of ice, the tactile qualities of both" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 421).

3.1.2   SMOOTH SPACE AND STRIATED SPACE

In Deleuze and Guattari's writing, the static or striated space of the state is contested by the fluid nature of the "heterogeneous smooth Other". The fixed interiority of the state is infiltrated by the "exteriority of the Nomad".

In their book '*A Thousand Plateaus',* written in 1980, from the series *'Capitalism and Schizophrenia,'* nomadeology is formulated as a means of defining the importance of emplacement and situating in regard to how things are structured. They use the distinction between 'smooth space' and 'striated space' from the composer Pierre Boulez to explain the distinction between fixed forms, or octave and smooth forms, or non-octave based scales, that allow irregularity.

The examples of the difference in spatial interpretation in the games of Chess and Go can function as a simple way to illustrate the differences in quality and agency between smooth and striated. Deleuze and Guattari use this example as the prefix of their chapter on nomadeology and smooth space, but when I refer to it, it is also as an example that can link these general spatial interpretations to the more specific Chinese perceptions of space, as Go, or *Weiqi,* is an ancient Chinese game that handles the space in a smooth way, while other ancient Chinese board games like *Xiangqi* or Chinese Chess[3] has more similar rules to the Indian/Western Chess, with pieces holding separate characteristics; advisors, elephants, horses, chariots, canons and soldiers, playing a battle on a board separating the two armies by a river with palaces on both sides. Chess (Indian/Persian/Western and Chinese) can thus be said to be an institutionalized, regulated and coded war, while Go is a war without battle lines. In Go, all the pieces are anonymous and carry a collective function, operating within a milieu of exteriority in an open space, in a uniformed gridded board. Chess instead has coded pieces that maneuver within a closed space where each piece has a fixed logic of movement and confrontational capacity, with restricted moves in space taking place in a fixed landscape.

Go is a game rich in strategy, while simple in rules. It has proven to be much harder to create computer programs that can play Go than Chess, and they have still not managed to create computer programs that can beat the best human Go players, as has been done with Chess. One of the reasons for this is that the variable is not life and death but territory, and "…computing territory is more difficult than computing life and death"[4](Chaslot 2010, p.10). Even more difficult to evaluate accurately with a computer program is influence over a territory,

> "…because the amount of influence depends on the specific board situation. In Go, there is often a trade-off between influence and territory. When a player tries to create a territory, the opponent may force him to close it by playing on the outside of that territory. This often creates influence for that opponent." (Chaslot 2010, p.11)

---

3   Xiangqi or Chinese Chess is NOT the same as Chinese Checkers or 'Kinasjakk' in Norwegian, which is a totally different game, invented in Germany 1893, and originally called Stern-Halma.

4   According to Guillaume Maurice Jean-Bernard Chaslot, who in his article on the computing strategies of the Monte-Carlo Tree Search, examines the difficulties of the Go game, and further writes about territory; "Several approaches are reasonably effective at evaluating territory. For example, Müller (1997) used a combination of search and static rules, whereas Bouzy (2003) chose to apply mathematical morphology. Van der Werf, Van den Herik, and Uiterwijk (2006) trained a multi-layered perceptron to predict potential territory".

The Xiangqi game, or Chinese Chess, arguably therefore has a different attitude to space than Go, as the emphasis is put on the coding and decoding of chess, against the "territorializing or deterritorializing of Go" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980). Chess is played in a field of interiority and Go is played in a field of exteriority, perhaps even subverting the borders between interiority and exteriority in a smooth space approach.

The example of Chess and Go is not an example of the differences between Western and Eastern spatial practice, as both these characteristics can also be found in games from China. It is instead a clear example of the differences between a spatial approach of interiority and a spatial approach of exteriority. In Deleuze and Guattari's thinking, they use the Mongols and Genghis Khan to represent the exteriority, the nomads and their war-machine. In the legends of the origin of Go, among others, it is said to be based on the ancient Chinese war-tribes or as a means of controlling floods. Both uses indicate its relevance in this chapter[5] as ways of illustrating and training perceptions of handling complex and irregular societal mechanisms. The two games also exemplify perceptions of fixed identities versus identities of becoming. Showing how there were and still are different ways of perceiving the organization of society in open and closed forms and how the subjects act differently within these different scenarios. This game example thus shows how the idea of acting within a smooth space is a spatial perception that can be traced back in Chinese history, and through the concrete examples from the migrant experiences in the contemporary Chinese urban context, a reading of the agencies related to smooth space can also be relevant, as seen below.

Interiority

Returning to the ideas from *'A Thousand Plateaus'*, we can start out with the state, which in Deleuze and Guattari's definition is characterized as the sphere of interiority. It can represent the Chinese state, but also the urban sphere of the Chinese cities, as the urban-rural divide within the Chinese practice is such a clear indication of a distinction between an interiority and an exteriority. The state in Deleuze and Guattari's writing always has to relate to an exteriority, and this exteriority is expressed in two directions; one is the worldwide machine that holds an autonomous relation to the interiority of the state, as for instance multinational corporations or religious movements, while the other direction is that of the marginal, segmented communities operating in opposition to the

---

5   The first written reference of the game is from the 4th century BC, but it is suggested that the game is much older, with legends and genesis pointing to the origin being that of the Chinese emperor Yao (2337-2258 BC) or perhaps the warlords using pieces of stone to map out attacking positions or used as equipment in flood control are both mentioned as likely origins put forward by both Lasker 1934, and Masayoshi (2005) according to Chaslot (2010).

operations of the state, such as the Chinese rural population in general, but also the migrant population within the Chinese cities. The interiority and exteriority are not at all independent of each other, but coexist in a field of interaction, and this interaction and the various relations that can take place is examined throughout the text in '*A Thousand Plateaus*'. For us it is relevant as it points to what relationship the nomad can have with the interiority and what relationship the interiority can have with its nomads. Especially when the borders are no longer strict, and the nomads operate within the state, or the state operates beyond their confined space, we then get interesting intermezzos or correlations of alternative territorialization and deterritorialization. I will come back to these aspects later in this chapter.

The state

The state is important as a provider of structurally determined elements, contextualizing the conditions. In my concrete examples I have used the word 'authority' and not 'state'. I have distinguished if it is authority on a local or national level, writing about the village authority, district authority, city authority, province authority and national authority. Even though they all represent the same structure, these various representations of the authoritative levels, even when looking at the same case within the same system, are diverse. Law and formal policy is understood as different from practiced policy by my interviewees. We can therefore not discuss the spatial positionings of the urban village or the migrant population within the urban ambience in the Chinese context without also elaborating an understanding of the structure and lack of consistency in the structure represented by 'the state'. As accounted for in the *Introduction* chapter, Zhang (2001) shows how her informants used different strategies to address different levels of authority, before, during and after the demolition of Zhejiangcun where the public acted against 'the state' using both formal and informal measures.

In the case of the fight for compensation in Xian Cun (see the *Cases* chapter) we can see how the local villagers tried in person to confront not only the local authority, but also the national authority, in a similar manner. Also we can see how the provincial authority responded differently compared to the district authority on their reclaims. The street and district authority continued to put pressure on completing the demolition, despite the lack of legal authorization, while the provincial authority put its foot down and stopped the process once the local villagers documented that it was not in accordance with the law of the system, reacting towards the harsh methods used by the lower level authority to carry out its plans. The 'authority' as a whole acts both as a formal and informal agent making legal inquiries towards the local villagers to sign the agreement papers, but also

using threats and punishments that are not legally grounded, all according to several contributors. I think the Chinese saying "For every measure from the top there will be a countermeasure at the bottom" (Wu et al 2007) can be relevant in more than one way, as 'the State' also includes both these directions of measures. 'The system' operates both in accordance with and in opposition to the laws of 'the system'. Structurally, 'the state' is therefore a contradictory entity, which is confronted accordingly.

For the demolition in Xian Cun the relation to the various levels of authority changed throughout the process. The local villagers I interviewed expressed a strong belief in the national authority being more principally strict than lower level officials, suggesting also that their battle was not that of a defeated local population up against 'the state'. They made a strong point about how they fought against local corruption and local leaders, and discussed how they believed the national level authority would be on their side once they heard the story of local corruption. This view can both be accounted for by sincere belief in the fairness of the system, and in the national level authority deliberately placing responsibility for a failed policy on lower level officials. I do not know what has influenced my informants the most, or how calculated they expressed their views on national policy when interviewed by me, but when they showed me a newspaper with an article about the national authority creating an office that would receive reclaims from locals, they seemed to have a sincere belief that this office would listen and react to their case. One year later they had still not got any answers, but this did not stop them from thinking it was a good idea to meet up in Beijing in person to confront 'the state'.

In the everyday process, 'the state' actively relates to and takes into consideration the fact that the Chinese society has a major informal sector. In the formal visualization this knowledge is not always put forward, and in some instances one can ask if this is deliberate or due to a lack of detailed knowledge. Huang (2009) describes how the workers in the informal economy in China account for 168 million out of a total of 238 million urban employees (numbers from 2004). He further claims that "the state statistical apparatus continues to neglect the informal sector" (Huang 2009, p. 405) as the informal (but registered) private enterprises and self-employed entities are not included in the statistical yearbooks, and "much less the unregistered *nongmingong* [migrant workers] and urban residents, that subcontract for work under formal units" (ibid, p. 424). This results in figures with favorable numbers for both average salary and working hours per week according to Huang (2009). *China Statistical Yearbook* indicates for instance that the annual average earnings per year in 2004 is 16,519 CNY, while Huang (2009) adds that *nongmingong* on average earned 9,360 CNY per year or 780 CNY per month (ibid,

p. 424). Also in their summary of working hours per week, *China Statistical Yearbook* neglects to include the harsh working hours of the 120 million nongmingong; working on average 11 hours a day, six to seven days a week when they state that "all groups and occupations and education levels range between forty and fifty hours [a week]" (*Zhongguo laodong tongji nianjiang*, 2007, p. 119, table 1-68 cited in Huang 2009, p. 424).

I have included this part as it is important to acknowledge how the Chinese policy is structurally determined, although the examples in this research elaborate and focus on the subjective measures and counter actions that sometimes chose a different direction from the wanted policy of 'the state'. The hukou system fundamentally determines the way migrants can come to relate to an urban reality for instance, but the authority has plural voices, and local policies are known to sometimes stretch the law. 'The state' is therefore itself both an informal and formal actor, relating towards a formal and informal reality. Through laws, regulations and deliberate confusion, the image of 'the state' as structurally determined is blurred. Through this the structural importance of 'the state' is challenged every day by both the authorities and the public.

Smooth space

In their book *'A Thousand Plateaus'* (1980) the "space of interiority" is the same as the "striated space". It is defined as distinct and specified in the sense that it is understood on the base of extension, universalization and with a monofocal perspective that allows for reproduction. Movement within this space is from location to location, from point to point, where every point has definite values. Striated space is equivalent to sedentary space, and this is in contrast to the values of smooth space or nomad space, as striated space is "a space of sites" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980).

Smooth space on the other hand is 'a region of places', a particular non-planiform field that resists centration, reproduction and universalization, and in that respect it can be said to be a deeply localized place, filled with "qualitative multiplicities" (Bergson's term[6]). A non-limited locality, either infinite or intimate, it is the space of the smallest deviation, a space of contact. To inhabit this smooth space means to be in the state of intermezzo, where the place is understood as a region, not moving from point to point but enjoying a direction of its own. This is the essence of the nomad space, as region and place converges, this means that the absolute is understood as local. This is also what

---

6   According to Deleuze and Guattari, 2004.

is built further on in the last part of this chapter when addressing translocality as local-local multi-scalar relations.

"I am somewhere, not drifting nowhere" (Casey 2008, p. 305[7]). In nomad space, this "somewhere" is not restricting your positioning to a single locality, still it is a deeply localized place, a non-limited locality, it "is immense without being either infinite or intimate" (Casey 2008, p. 304). Nomad space is the local absolute, while striated space is the relative global, limited and limiting.

With smooth/striated as a spatial distinction it is interesting to start discussing the space of the urban village, or the non-limited multi-scalar locality of the Chinese migrant, but before doing so we should note that Deleuze and Guattari distinguish between a nomad and a migrant move, that is a distinction between migrant and nomad operations in space. This is done on the premise of how the local operations move between places and regions. While the migrant is characterized as someone who goes from point to point in a journey, the nomad proceeds by "relays along a trajectory" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 380), therefore the nomad does not move to a dwelling but dwells by moving. This explains the intermezzo or interval style process of the nomad space. Of course the spatial practice of the Chinese rural-urban migrant is diverse, but throughout this text I will present many migrant narratives on multi-scalar relations to place, and based on this information, I want to argue that the Chinese rural-urban migrants are trapped within the liminality of never being fully integrated in the urban sphere, because of the urban frontier of the hukou system, which can be said to correspond better with Deleuze and Guattari's definition of the nomad than that of the migrant, although their agencies are an agglomeration of both these spatial practices. Alternatively, the urban village can also be an interesting example of smooth space or nomad space, as it operates beyond the confined space of its interiority, and in some ways reacts to the surrounding city as if it was not the interiority of a state, but rather the exteriority of the steppe, redefining the borders between the interiority and the exteriority within the Chinese spatial context. Through this reading the picture becomes more complex. It is no longer the striated space of the city versus the smooth space of the steppe, as smooth space can also be found within the city in the form of urban villages and in the practice of the nomad-migrant in their relation to the urban sphere. The topology in question is one where the Chinese migrants operate within a nomad space of deterritorialization and a migrant space of reterritorialization.

---

7   In Edward S. Casey's book "The Fate of Place, where he in his last chapter on 'Giving a face to Place in the Present' introduces the nomadeology of Deleuze and Guattari.

3.1.3 MIGRANTS' MOVES AND NOMADS' UNHOUSED INHABITATION

As the Chinese migrants can be understood as nomads, but also migrants, it is also interesting to follow Deleuze and Guattari's argument of the migrant move - from one place to another - even when the second point is uncertain, it is still a point. This journey of leaving behind is different from the nomad who breaks with the paradigm of the settled when they inhabit the open space through an "unhoused inhabitation", creating a local integration through their moving bodies. This is not to be seen as 'unhomely', as the nomad is at home on the steppe, but the points nomads cross are simply consequences of traversing the field of trajectories, as the route of the nomad space distributes people in this open space. Related to our case this perception becomes difficult, as one of the common ways of characterizing the Chinese rural-urban migrants has been to call them 'the floating population', but not in a way that necessarily includes the positive aspects of coping with relations to a moving landscape and a dynamic form of life[8]. The rural-urban migrants carry with them some personal belongings from place to place, but also depend on an attachment to a location to fulfill the requirements of a dwelling, with a bed, some sanitary facilities and a place to cook their food. The function of the place where they attach, prepared for them before their arrival, with an empty bunk bed and access to a toilet and a sink, is in this manner not unlike the way traditional Iranian nomads prepare their landscape for inhabitation in my understanding[9], often arriving at an area with two holes in the ground; one hole being a well and the other an oven for baking bread. The landscapes they inhabit seem uninhabited at first sight and when not in use, but once they settle and roll out the carpets they reintroduce their habitable culture in this place of cultural landscape. Possessing the two holes in the ground and their carried belongings, it becomes a present manifestation of an ancient civilization of dwelling by moving.

When temporarily settled in a dormitory or a rented room in an urban village, the migrant-nomads are, however, far from being reterritorialized in a profound way. It is a fragile and vulnerable position of never knowing if this bed will also be their rest-place next week or not. This uncertain way of attachment to a place may not be justified as 'dwelling by moving' as having to live with this unpredictable housing situation does not allow one to 'dwell upon' a process of homemaking[10]. The rural-urban migrant-nomads

---

8   For a broader discussion on this see the migrant definitions in Chapter 1, part 2

9   Based on author's own visits to tribal areas in Iran in 2001.

10   I am not saying that nomads are not handling uncertainty in relation to the spatial situation. Both nomads and migrants have had to adopt means to handle uncertainty, and it is interesting to ask how these different life forms handle uncertainty differently. Perhaps migrants have a broader vocabulary of actions, as they are less bound by the schisms within the urban realm? This will be further discussed in the second part of this chapter.

are perhaps more in line with the 'migrant move' of leaving behind, such as leaving behind the countryside, as the future is seen to be in the city, or within the city-sphere, one city is left for another, possibly without leaving behind the bonds that can make them return.

3.2   Dormitory life with personal fabric and curtains. *Photo Documentation Project.*

3.1.4   INTENSE SPATIALITY

Orders of displacement and hollow space

Deleuze and Guattari (1980) propose an ambulant or nomad science that exceeds the space of reproduction, and is thus not autonomous or even possible to calculate. Unlike the stratum of the interiority that can "invent the fiction of a state that is universal by right" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 414), the nomad thought can be characterized by not allying "…itself with a universal thinking subject,… [it] does not ground itself in an all-encompassing totality but is on the contrary deployed in a horizonless milieu that is smooth space, steppe, desert, or sea" (ibid, p. 418). One moves not only efficiently but also intensely within smooth space. Immersion in smooth space is thus at once body-based and landscape-oriented. Smooth space becomes a matter of intense spatiality instead of 'extensionality', that is, a focus on intensity rather than on extension. Through this they emphasize the importance of not simply perceiving place but rather focusing on how people use place and how to negotiate place. This perception is relevant in relation to the thoughts of Sennett used on spatial negotiations, discussed later in this chapter and in the analysis of the use of the curving in the old main street in Xian Cun in the *Cases* chapter for instance.

In their explaining of the nomad and migrant moves, Deleuze and Guattari introduce the 'transhumant', who do not follow a flow but rather enter a circuit. There is a constant mix between the nomad, the migrant and the transhumant. The rural-urban migrant in the Chinese cities is a good example of this mixed identity, constituted by the three distinct productions of space: smooth, matter-flow and rotational. The migrant space of matter-flow needs a short explanation. It can be seen as a matter-energy, a deterritorialized matter that carries singularities. It is only intermediary to the extent that it is autonomous, in such a way as to "...establish a whole new relation between thoughts and things, a vague identity between the two" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 450). As for the effect of roundness, it is a vague essence that is different from a circle, and different from some kind of geometric pointy figure. A matter-flow is a topological movement:

> "...following where it leads by connecting operations to a materiality, instead of imposing a form upon a matter: what one addresses is less a matter submitted to laws than a materiality possessing a nomos. One addresses less a form capable of imposing properties upon a matter than material traits of expression constituting affects." (ibid, p. 451)

Matter thus becomes a conveyor of singularities and traits of expression. "To follow a flow of matter is to itinerate, to ambulate. It is intuition in action" (ibid, p. 452), therefore showing how the migrants move differently from the transhumants, who do not follow a flow, but rather move for seasonal reasons or move with the aim of returning. Given the conditions of shifting regulations and varying demand for labor among the areas of massive migration in China, this intuition in action, of following the flow, is an important strategy for the migrants when handling the migrant space. It can be seen separate from the dominant discourse of the 'floating population' in that this intuition is grounded in necessity, and is not handled carelessly. It can perhaps be regarded as a form of skilled improvisation, as described in the second part of this chapter. This improvisation is not to be mixed with mindless occurrence. It is rather a tool to address the shifting policy and varying demand for labor.

The smooth space can also hold a communicating role in the town-country relationship, but it is not always welcomed, as the state use filters against the fluidity of the masses and often sees it as its concern to vanquish nomadism, restrict migration and to control the flows of the exterior according to Deleuze and Guattari (1980). They hold that when representing one stance in relation to human organization, the state requires, for reasons

of discipline and show, that the organization is conducted as rhythmic marches, dividing up space, while the nomad organizes through an autonomous numerical organization that handles orders of displacement, in a smooth space "…which is occupied without self being counted" (ibid, p. 430). Space-wise Deleuze and Guattari sketch different modes of operating beyond the confined striated space and in challenging relations with smooth space, through specific spatial orders of intermezzo. I will here mention the Pax Mongolica and the 'abstract holey space'. Both examples should be read primarily as abstract examples and not historical happenings. These writers' main concern with their interest of nomads is the potential of the nomad on an abstract level. Their focus cannot be said to be based on actual studies of nomads.

The nomads can enter into interiority to gain sovereignty over the striated space without erasing the role and importance of exterior or smooth space. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the Mongolian rule of Genghis Khan and his successors is the ultimate example of how smooth space, as spatial order, gained reign of cities and states and how they did this without defeating smooth space when conquering the imperial centers. After the brutal conquering phase they established a stable environment for communication and trade across the whole Eurasian territory by "…maintaining a smooth space of the steppe to which the imperial centers were subordinated. That was their genius, the Pax Mongolica" (ibid, p. 462). The urban village as smooth, nomad space, found to gain sovereignty over striated space within the confined borders of the interiority or the city could be another example if we stretch our argument further.

They use 'the Smith' to exemplify how the practice of relations between the interiority and the exteriority is expressed not only through interactions but also through mixed identities. Carrying a production of both tools and weapons, serving both the interiority and the exteriority, both employed and frequented by the nomads, while serving the state, the Smith carries this hybrid identity, spatially identified as 'the holey' by Deleuze and Guattari. The holey space (not holy but holey, as in making a hollow space in something solid), can communicate with both smooth and striated space;

> "Smiths are not nomadic among the nomads and sedentary among the sedentaries, nor half-nomadic among the nomads, half-sedentary among sedentaries. Their relation to others results from their internal itinerancy, from their vague essence, and not the reverse. It is in their specificity, it is by virtue of their itinerancy, by virtue of their inventing a holey space that they necessarily communicate with the sedentaries and with the nomads [...] They are in themselves double: a hybrid,

an alloy, a twin formation. […] Not 'impure' but 'mixed'." (ibid, p. 457-458)

The rural-urban migrant-nomad could perhaps also take on this role as the mediator between the interiority and the exteriority, through their reciprocal dialectic movement between the rural and the urban and their transitory role in this intermezzo. The urban village is perhaps a holey place in this respect, occupied by Smiths. For the migrants' holey practice, this can be seen for instance when the rural-urban migrant-nomads on a back and forth oscillation return home to the countryside and bring with them knowledge, networks and practice to and from the city, as discussed in the section on the 'arrival city', detailed later in this chapter.

The very last point I wish to deliver from their book is of the 'undoing subject'. Deleuze and Guattari claim that the undoing of the subject is typical for the nomad war machine (ibid, p. 442). This can be seen as a form of decoding, and I would argue it is practiced by the migrants in their use of the city. I will go further into this aspect when I write about the thoughts of Sennett in relation to craftsmanship and the skills of soft power and minimum force later in this chapter, and also in the last chapter when I discuss how the migrants relate to the urban villages being demolished.

3.1.5   THE URBAN VILLAGE AS A MIGRANT PLACE

The way I have presented Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of how the nomad subject can operate within a smooth space and how this smooth, open, deterritorialized space can be practiced have influenced and formed a base for other texts. The paragraph on multi-scalar locality by Brickell and Datta (2011) discussed further in the second part of this chapter can, the way I read them, be seen as a direct continuation of Deleuze and Guattari's argument. While smooth space is a general conception of nomad space, the following paragraph on the arrival city is a concept of the urban village as a migrant place.

3.1.6   THE URBAN VILLAGE AS ARRIVAL CITY

In his book '*Arrival Cities*', Doug Saunders (2010) focuses on the rural-urban migrant neighborhoods' potential as tools for integration into the urban sphere. He looks at arrival cities all over the world, and uses examples of different scales, from streets and neighborhoods to whole cities. His first concrete example of an 'arrival city' is the village-in-the-city phenomenon in China. Even if the urban village is at times situated as a physical periphery in the city, Saunders claims the urban villages and other similar arrival

city identities constitute the new center of the world, the place where history is actually written – but still ignored. This, he states, is because we are now in the final round of urbanization, with consequences of big proportions for humankind, but governments in general have a tendency to prevent the formation of arrival cities or try to eradicate them along the way as they realize the value of urbanization, but are not willing to change the political course to allow for, in the Chinese example, the urban villages to play the positive role of a well-functioning arrival city within the overall urbanization process.

In Saunders' argument, the arrival city is a transitional space that builds on the constant linkages towards the originating villages and the established city, providing a foothold in the city through its connectedness and urban ambition. The arrival city should thus not be seen as a static slum, an immigrant gateway or a community of primary settlement, but rather as a place for dynamic change with a transitory role that is vital in the urbanization process to absorb the additional grand population of rural-urban migrants who are expected to move to the cities during the next generation, on a global scale.

Saunders further holds that the arrival city can create and distribute social capital through its ability to create and maintain networks, functioning as an entry mechanism, an urban establishment platform and a social mobility path. In this way the arrival city is linked to the surrounding urban sphere, its functions, its wider opportunities – and limitations.

Although Saunders points to all this potential within the arrival city, he also points to the factors that can turn the well-functioning arrival cities into poverty traps. The physical form of the arrival city is in that respect important for its success; the presence of neutral public spaces, the ability to establish small businesses or open shops or workshops on the ground floor or to extend houses are some examples. Also the accessibility of social services and proximity to schools and infrastructural links to city centers, workplaces and cultural activities are vital for the arrival city neighborhood to avoid becoming a poverty trap. These are all spatial qualities that the central urban villages in Chinese cities have or could have had. Xian Cun and Shi Gang Xi Cun are for instance two villages situated with very good infrastructure links, and used to have good opportunities to find work both inside the villages and in their vicinity. When the Chinese urban villages can only be said to be well-functioning arrival cities to a limited extent, it is because they provide networks and partly function as entry mechanisms into the city or establishment platforms, but the urban villages do not provide a social mobility path for the migrant residents. This is, however, not to blame on the physical form, as the practices within the villages are flexible in regard to house extensions and the opening of new shops on

the ground floor, but with these abilities only asserted by the local villagers, and not by the migrants. The social and economic situation distinguishes between the migrants and the local villagers, excluding the migrants from possibilities in spatial practice within the urban village, while the policies of rural-urban divide generally work against the transition of migrants' integration into a fully-fledged urban life[11].

Looking beyond China, Saunders argues that it is equally possible to become fully integrated, both economically and culturally, within the confines of the original arrival city, not needing to move out of the arrival city to achieve this even though the arrival city might appear segregated from the population perspective. He builds on the British scholars Ceri Peach, Nissa Finney and Ludi Simpson[12] who conducted examinations of supposedly segregated neighborhoods where they found "…these neighborhoods to be no more prone to poverty or social isolation than non-clustered neighborhoods…" (Saunders 2010, p. 320). The ethnic enclaves they looked into "disperse" approximately as many inhabitants to surrounding mixed middle class neighborhoods as they receive from abroad[13]. The areas only stay poor because they constantly receive new poor residents. The rate of movement in and out of the urban villages in China, however, indicates frequency and flow, but this is not necessarily a sign of upward mobility or integration into the urban society, as the migrants are not dispersed into a middle class neighborhood when moving out, but usually move to another urban village of the same standard or to a dormitory. They might move within the same city, to another city, or back home, but none of these options indicate upward mobility or integration into the urban sphere. From my interviews I got the impression that the migrants' moves are usually dictated by their job situation, but the diversity in reasoning can be exemplified in the story of Jiajun and the *House Rent Project* in the *Introduction* and *Cases* chapter.

To support his view of the importance of the arrival city, Saunders refers to the *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography* (Washington: IBRD, 2009)

11   Among the more successful arrival cities, operating as upward-mobility clusters are some neighborhoods in the UK where the main difference from other failing arrival cities is that 85% of the arrival city migrant residents have UK citizenship according to Saunders (2010).

12   Who go against Robert E. Park and his theory of urban assimilation, expressing that social relations are inevitably correlated with spatial relations, and that immigrants have to leave the ethnic enclaves to integrate into mainstream society according to Saunders. He claims to be accompanied by a sizeable body of new scholars when arguing that it is equally possible to become fully integrated, economically and culturally, in the city when residing within the confines of the original arrival city.

13   This is in a British context, where citizenship is not the main problem for the arrival city inhabitants. For the majority of Chinese rural-urban migrants with rural hukou, moving from the urban villages to the middle class areas is beyond reach.

104

by the World Bank, where it is concluded that "…the most effective route to poverty reduction and economic growth is to encourage the highest possible urban population density and the growth of the largest cities through migration – as long as the urban areas where rural migrants arrive are given intensive investment and infrastructure development by governments" (Saunders 2010, p. 58).

To stress the failure of restricting the arrival city, Saunders writes that "…countries rarely experience economic growth while banning or restricting rural-urban migration" (Saunders 2010, p. 56). China has doubtless managed this contradicting practice by relying on a massive migration to fuel workers for the export industry while only allowing temporary migration and restricting the permanent inclusion of migrants within the cities. This dual policy is trapping the migrants in a liminal in-between state. Using Shenzhen city as an example, Saunders claims China's arrival cities have failed as they do not allow for real or permanent 'arrivals' into the urban sphere. I agree with him if he looks at the whole city and its policy and responsibility for the arriving migrants, with reference to the hukou policy and its implications. However, I would argue the urban village has not failed, as it never had an agenda to become this inclusive mechanism within the urban environment. The mega city and the national policy have failed on a moral level, neglecting to take responsibility for the human costs of rural-urban moves. The urban village on the other hand could further strengthen its position of being the arrival city of the Chinese urban realm if policies were improved. The policy of handling the urban villages and the procedure for handling rural-urban migrants are interlinked within the Chinese economic and political context, and both practices need to be changed in order to achieve a more inclusive urban development.

3.1.7   RURAL-URBAN DIVIDES/LIMINALITY
In this case with the urban villages and the migrants trapped in the in-betweenness of the rural entities within the cities, the place and time of transition is not only a state of becoming, but just as much a transition-formation. A constant but shifting ambience of marginality, or "liminality" as Turner (1964) would have phrased it. Turner wrote that in the 'liminal' period a transitional being is ambiguous as he passes through a realm where he is no longer classified by the former state and not yet classified by the coming state. This in-betweenness has trapped both the urban village and the migrant population within the city, but as I will argue later in this chapter, this state of in-betweenness is in some ways trespassed by the practice of subverting boundaries. Furthermore, Turner built on Mary Douglas' notion regarding how the 'unclear' can be seen as the 'unclean' in her concept of 'pollution'. In this regard the transitional beings are unclear and

105

contradictory in a sense that makes them polluting, being liminal in regard to the cultural topography. The words and actions of the 'clean up and comb out campaigns'[14] and the urge for 'harmonious urban development' within the Chinese public discourse[15] can be seen to perform a justification for such an unclear=unclean=eradicate implementation that urban villages and the migrant population have had to relate to.

3.1.8 KINETIC EVERYDAY

Proceeding to look at different conceptualized spatial interpretations, the following section discusses the overall urban sphere as the arena of 'everyday urbanism' and in the next section, the overall urban sphere as the 'kinetic city'. These two approaches have been developed as arguments and tools for planners to take action within the shifting urban fabric. I use these two readings to illustrate how the city can be understood, and how theory, method and process can relate. While Deleuze is a philosopher, Guattari a psychoanalyst and Saunders a journalist, here come two contributions from urban planners that through their agency-oriented approach try to build on ideas related to the other thinkers I have addressed in this chapter.

Approaches of planning necessarily need to address both places and agency, and this section could thus just as well be placed at the end of this chapter summing up the two parts, but I have chosen to let it stand as a continuation of the space-related focus, and thereby use it to link to the next part of this chapter, with its apparent involvement with how place is negotiated through use.

3.1.9 EVERYDAY URBANISM

"Everyday Urbanism [is] a manifestation in physical terms of the unsettled, restless urban condition experienced by cities (more often mega cities) in Asia and the West" (Mehrotra 2005, p. 13).

Everyday urbanism can be seen as a theoretical reflection on interpretations of the urban realm, but also as a method for looking at the social layer constituting the everyday space of urban populations, and as a means to orient the design process towards a focus of intensifying what is already there; a rich temporality of existing urban practice. For me this approach has potential as a useful tool when looking at the urban village, but also when addressing the qualities of the Chinese city as such, as a means of increasing the focus of the informal layers.

---

14   On 'clean up and comb out campaigns' in Guangzhou, see Siu 2007.
15   On 'harmonious urban development' see second part of this chapter.

Margaret Crawford, John Chase and John Kaliski (1999) have written the book *'Everyday Urbanism'*, and through that elaborated the term. Later, Crawford published a book with concrete projects working with an everyday urbanism approach in Panyu, China as a tool to both understanding specific situations and responding with urban design in an accumulative approach that works with small changes to transform situations.

Crawford, Chase and Kaliski (1990) build on Henri Lefebvre (1974) when seeing everyday life as an arsenal of all kinds of meanings. They wish to conceptualize everyday space as "a physical domain of everyday public activity that exists between the defined and identifiable realms of the home, the institution, and the workplace" (Crawford cited in Mehrotra 2005, p. 18). Crawford defines everyday urbanism as a diffuse space where seemingly clear physical borders are negotiated in multiple ways that blur its normative clarity. She focuses on the heterogeneity in people's ways of using public space, and tries to show how this approach can be the starting point for a design process that can be seen more as an attitude, as she tries to reconnect the "human and social meanings with urban design and planning"(Crawford sited in Mehrotra 2005, p. 18).

Everyday urbanism focuses on how small changes to the existing cityscape can accumulate to positive transformation making the urban more inhabitable. It can be seen in opposition to approaches that work with master plans or processes that depend on mandates from the decision-makers on a larger scale, as it is a partial approach that should work along with other practices, and not necessarily replace them as these different attitudes represent different values, sensibilities and modalities that co-exist in time but inhabit different spaces. Kelbaugh's argument shows how everyday urbanism can be seen as intentional urbanism working as an opponent to conventional urbanism but also opposing 'new urbanism', which strives for a familiar and normative architectural style, while maintaining the structural relationship between the built form and social behavior (Kelbaugh cited in Mehrotra 2005). Furthermore, everyday urbanism is seen as opposing 'post urbanism', or 're-urbanism' as they are seen to build on "…Post-structuralist theories of knowledge and new hybrid possibilities and programs. Form is predictably unpredictable" (Kelbaugh cited in Mehrothra 2005, p. 9), with an abstract language and little reference to the physical or historic context.

When I wish to comment on this set of different urbanisms, it is because the contemporary Chinese city, in a very different state compared with the traditional Chinese city, can be read and understood to struggle in these various distinct directions. The Chinese city is no longer a set of gated units inside a compact city that can be understood with

conventional urbanism. They build eight-lane streets out in the wilderness and in a short time, it is sprawling with both informal growth of urban villages and new high-rise residential areas called Little Italy or Pacific Blue. Changes appear both inside the old city fabric and in new areas further away from the city center. The transformation of the city can thus partly be understood through ideas like 'new urbanism' or 'post urbanism', but in regard to agency, indeed an understanding also needs to ground the daily or ordinary life, for instance within an everyday urbanist approach.

Crawford (Mehrotra 2005) insists that everyday space is a diffuse landscape, it is banal and repetitive. It is the streetscape with shopping malls and the no man's land of places, with few characteristics that people pay attention to. The main difference between how these places are perceived, in the different urban focuses, is that while everyday urbanism sees it as a highly specific "zone of possibility and potential transformation" (ibid, p. 19), the new urbanists see it as an aesthetic problem. Furthermore, post urbanists see it as generic and generalized or like a "junk space", as Rem Koolhaas has defined it, according to Crawford (ibid). In Crawford's words post urbanism expressions produce a sensation of defamiliarization, when "making strange" the ordinary experiences, while the everyday urbanists try to refamiliarize instead of looking at the alienation or the shock value of accepting them as extreme urban types, like she says Koolhaas has done in his recent urban research. This was done in collaboration with Harvard University on the Pearl River Delta and the exacerbated difference (see the *Context* chapter). It is interesting that Crawford, while still teaching at Harvard, also went to Pearl River Delta to investigate how to conceptualize the extreme urbanities in a different way than Koolhaas[16].

The distinction between everyday urbanism and post urbanism is also interesting in regard to my focus on poststructuralist thinking. Should this critique mean one has to reject the poststructuralist thinking to obtain an approach of everyday urbanism? I choose to argue that just like the ideas behind everyday urbanism can be handled in very different ways with regard to architectonic practice, so can the ideas of poststructuralist thinking foster various urban ambitions, not just through a post urbanist approach. The form of post urbanism as exemplified with the work of Koolhaas is one possible practical solution among many others, not necessarily yet explored. These potential expressions could

16   I have not been able to get hold of her book '*Nansha Coastal City: Landscape and Urbanism in the Pearl River Delta*', Alan Berger and Margaret Crawford, eds., Harvard University Graduate School of Design, 2006. I have therefore not compared her approach in PRD with that of Rem Koolhaas. In the Context chapter I have briefly presented the Times Museum designed by Koolhaas, and as explained I understand it as representing a stance towards everyday urbanism in its focus on everyday practice.

allow for more focus on the ordinary experience when emphasizing the poststructuralist focus on relations. If we should for instance solely apply the everyday urbanism approach to the urban village phenomenon of China, we could fall short in regard to perception. The focus on the urban village merely as a place for living and working, for sleeping and eating, and shopping could fail to address the urban village in a broader perspective, as the place and facilitator of transition. Thus, from a practical approach everyday urbanism would, in my understanding, gain from a focus that manages to include the aspects from poststructuralist ideas of rhizome logic, taking seriously the multiple dimensions of a field, through a planning approach that allows for heterogeneity and connections between various actors of the field, seeing every site and every condition as multi-scalar, with planning and acting in accordance.

3.1.10 KINETIC CITY

If you look for the term 'Kinetic City' on the internet, most of your hits will be for computer games, but the Mumbai architect, professor and chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design at Harvard Graduate School, Rahul Mehrotra, has also made it a term within the urban planning context. He describes everyday urbanism as the landscape of the "kinetic city" (Mehrotra 2005, p. 12). With kinetic city, he defines the elastic urban condition in contrast to the static city. He also uses the 'bazaar city' as a more familiar connotation for the kinetic city, exemplified by why people in the West are so fascinated by farmers' markets, as a wanted "third landscape" (Jackson 1984[17]), in cities of low density and dead public domains. In his words the farmers' market creates a sphere with a humanizing effect, re-establishing human connections. He further goes on to state that while in Asia, particularly in South Asia, tidiness in the urban realm has a different connotation. "Architects, planners and urban designers are concerned about the organization of human activity in space, and debates on urbanism are posed in those terms" (Mehrotra 2005, p. 12). When somebody then tidies up the kinetic city or everyday urbanism, Mehrotra claims that in Asia they will become urban heroes for creating a more regular or static city, while in the West they would be expected to create or facilitate everyday urbanism.

Mehrotra (2005) shows how the city can be understood as a dual configuration of the 'static city' and the 'kinetic city'. This is to replace and subordinate the dichotomy of

---

17   Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. Discovering the Vernacular Landscape. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984, as cited in Mehrotra 2005, p. 12.

the formal and informal city, as formal and informal cannot be separated in the way it functions within the urban context. Within both the formal and informal city, one can find parameters of kinetic and static qualities. By static he means permanent, bi-dimensional and monumental, and by kinetic he means temporary, three-dimensional and incremental. Mehrotra argues that the formal and informal are not two entities that coexist without interaction though the informal and formal are interwoven within the same city. Informal residents work in the formal sector while living in the informal city, or vice versa, where people live in the formal city and work in the informal sector. In Guangzhou this dependency can be illustrated with how the hotels and companies of the Pearl River New Town rent apartments for their staff to live in in the nearby urban villages for instance.

Mehrotra (2005) argues that when one defines the urban as formal versus informal, it is often with the agenda to strengthen the formal sector in an effort to transform cities in developing countries. One neglects to see how the wealthy also depend on the informal economy, and how the informal sector constructively builds on the conditions of density found in the urban settings. According to Mehrotra, when aiming to eradicate the informal sector, the conditions for making equally just urban planning vanishes, as the poor get marginalized and the behavior of the rich is misunderstood. When asking what we can learn from the informal sector he points to the changing use of public space from hour to hour and how the people adapt to the density and turn it into economic opportunity. In Xian Cun this can be demonstrated by the use of the curving in the old main street as exemplified in the next paragraph and in the *Cases* chapter. The kinetic city with its temporal transformation allows for people to coexist in the dense conditions of the urban space.

> "Rather than seek[ing] to remove these [informal/kinetic] patterns, they should work out how to design the city's streets and spaces, and how to plan new areas, such that these patterns of activity can thrive in greater comfort for all residents, rich and poor. In this way the bazaar city can become the commercial city, in action and not simply in image." (Datu 2010[18])

I find the approach of the thoughts behind the kinetic city interesting in relation to the urban village issues in Chinese cities, as it is necessary to try to see the urban

---

18   Datu 2010: Writing on 'Kinetic City' in '*Rahul Mehrotra and the "kinetic city": designing for informality in Mumbai'.*

landscape with a different set of distinctions than the neat/messy, formal/informal, or the harmonious/unharmonious urban development as counterpoints. In relation to the continuous transformation between the surrounding city and the urban village, the kinetic city approach focuses on looking at adjustments in activity, and does not focus on the architecture; "Events and changes in time are more important than monuments and places in space" (Datu 2010). This approach opens up for a different dialogue once the formal/informal debate is no longer the parameter. It also corresponds better with the ideas of Lefebvre, Crawford, Sennett and Serres, that I already have or will account for later in this chapter, and the focus I have put on the repeating visits to the same sites to observe change in use over time.

In the second part of this chapter I will present the ideas of time and space sharing of interests in relation to the practice within the urban village, and in my opinion this can be seen as another way of reading the city as a kinetic ambience. With the focus of the kinetic city approach I also want to argue that the time and space sharing of interest approach subverts the notion of formal/informal and thus enables us to look at the relation between the city and the urban village in the context of temporality and change in a different and more fruitful way.

3.1.11 THE KINETIC CITY IN TIME AND SPACE SHARING OF INTERESTS

Here I want to exemplify the kinetic city or the time and space sharing of interests with the story of the site outside the old Confucian school in the old main road of Xian Cun. When I visited for the first time in 2008, the street vendors were using only very limited sections of the street during the daytime. The flow of people and cycle wagons in the narrow main street did not allow for vendors in the street, who were limited to the few places where the street was wider, and one such place was in the curve creating a small plaza in front of the old Confucian school. At the time it was leased out along with a dozen other communal properties, by a local villager, to migrants putting up cycle garages. The street vendors and garbage collectors coming to this spot in the village would not occupy the street for a whole day, but rather for shorter periods, with one activity following the other throughout the day. The paper collectors were migrants living in a poorer urban village further away from the city center, and they would turn up almost daily at the same place to collect paper. They would not sit down, but stand next to their wagons and move slowly from place to place in the open space. Their occupation of space was more one of a wanderer than of a settler. Along with them, on a daily basis you would see several women placing their stands along the walls of the cycle garage where they did not block the entrance of the main road shops. They would display their goods on

carpets on the floor, or on low tables. They were often requested to move their stand by the patrolling village police, but as they always tended to follow these requests, they would usually be allowed to keep their goods and return again later. One of the women I talked to lived just across the street, and she had a small child that she still breastfed. She needed the convenience of going from home to the place where she could sell her goods and back home again easily. Her personal situation would not allow her to stay on the stand for the entire day. This temporal occupation of space fitted her life situation, but also in more general terms, it meant that it could provide a place for many more vendors to sell their goods. All together they would in a way occupy the place, but each individual would only temporarily occupy the place and would thus not be seen as a threat to the spatial use and would thus be allowed to continue their occupancy of the space. Occasionally the guards would ask them to leave, but often they would also just walk past and allow them to stay.

The policies regarding how to regulate the use of the space in the village changed continually, with the guards acting very differently from time to time. One year later, in 2009, when I visited again, the situation was more or less the same, with the same garbage collectors still coming daily to the small plaza. In 2010 however, there were street vendors all along the main street, and the flow of pedestrians and wagons in the street was not as smooth as it used to be. The vendors said that in practice, they were allowed to extend their space of trade even further out into the street at night time, when the crowds arrived after work and the street was much more of a pedestrian shopping street than of an infrastructural corridor for transporting goods. The vendors said they felt no threat from the guards as they were no longer preoccupied with strengthening the 'harmonious urban development' of the village. As long as the street vendors did not block the traffic their presence was accepted. The village was about to be demolished, and the loosening up of the street use was part of the last stage of the village life. The kinetic aspects of the urban ambience were strengthened as it was no longer confronted or challenged, which affected the whole urban display within the village, but whether intentional or not, this was a way to illustrate how the area was about to fall apart. The kinetic ambience of the urban village was about to be eradicated forever. The shopkeepers where holding firm on the ground floor while the buildings they were located in or outside were torn down. The pulse of everyday life was accompanied by the drilling and smashing to pieces of built structures, all embraced in demolishing dust. The vendors took part in cleaning up the site, removing all usable materials for recycling. Wagons would no longer stop to collect paper from everyday activities but would be dragged out of the village fully loaded with metal mesh gates and wooden doors from the final move.

3.2 SITUATED SUBJECTS

Here the focus is on the situating of subjects; questioning situatedness at work, looking at the dynamics and relations of the subject in place. When addressing the migrants' subjective positioning, as a spatial agency, within the Chinese urban realm I have tried to create a logic of going from the most simple relations in the form of interference and disturbance, accounted for by Serres, via a short look at power and appropriation of space, using Zhang Li and Lefebvre and continuing with Sennett on resistance and ambiguity. Further I build on the practice of transgression by Pun Ngai, how migrants can be said to be out of place and put in place, with reference to Tamara Jacka, and ending the chapter addressing the notion of translocality and multi-scalar locality by Brickell and Datta.

By focusing on the positioning or situatedness of migrants and the local-local-spatial relations migrants engage in, it is to challenge the dominant discourse stating that the Chinese migrants are either depicted as 'on the move' or 'placed' in the peri-urban areas, and in that sense can be seen as either displaced or emplaced[19]. I hope to show both how urban villages play an important part in the migrants' situating in the city and how the migrants of the urban village at the same time should be seen as traversing the urban village sphere when building on a multi-scalar situatedness within and beyond the city.

While some scholars in their studies of migrants in the city have not engaged in the issue of urban villages, and simply referred to them as migrant enclaves without discussing their impact on migrant lives, others clearly situate the migrants in the urban villages (Siu 2007). By doing so, however, they neglect to take into consideration how migrants themselves negotiate their relation to the urban sphere through their everyday practice and existence on a broader multi-scalar basis, including the urban neighborhood, the whole city, their hometown and beyond. I would like to argue that both these two approaches need to be challenged with a focus that situate the migrants in a multi-scalar locality that includes, but at the same time goes beyond, the urban village. Only then can the grounds of spatial inclusion for the migrants in the city be recognized and negotiated, despite the discriminating rural-urban policy.

---

19   Tamara Jacka (2006) writes of how migrants in urban villages are "out of place and put in place". Helen F. Siu (2007) writes of how migrants in urban villages are 'emplaced' and 'displaced'. This will be further elaborated and discussed later in this chapter and in the final discussion.

3.2.1 INTERFERENCE

The book '*The Parasite*' by Michel Serres (1980) was originally written in French, where the term parasite has three distinct meanings; a biological parasite, a social parasite and static or interference. The third meaning is important in the book to complement and build the character of what a parasite can be seen as in a simple relationship and in a complex system. Serres argues how the act of the parasite can be seen as an elementary relation. It is represented by a one-way arrow in a relationship; "Irreversible like the flow of the river. One feeds on another and gives nothing in return" (Serres 2007, p. 182). The parasitism is in the act as there is a third element involved, the interruption. The parasite needs a channel, a relation to parasite the host. The parasite interrupts the host, but who the parasite is, who or what the interrupter is and who the host is might change.

Serres (1980) uses La Fontaine's fables to show the reader how the parasite is not only the rat enjoying a leftover feast, but read differently, the parasite can be the host or it can be the noise in the door making the rats fly. It can be the interruption of the feast, or the interruption of the system, or the interruption of the relation in any given form. If one need two parts to establish a relation, there is always a hidden third; an included or excluded third. The interruption is the third. The parasite might be the third. From the animal characters of the fable, Serres derives an understanding that he uses to explain mechanisms of relations between human beings in societies, and between humans and the environment. This can also be read as a critique of the dualism as the parasite is never just the second violin; he is always a third party, tilting the balance of the two. The parasite can be a man, but the 'parasited' is never only a man, it is always a system in Serres' words, as the parasite 'parasites' the relations.

Regarding relationships, the positions change, and with them the whole foundation of the system of the relation. The cat lets the mice go if there is cheese left for him. He becomes a predator only if he can no longer be a parasite to someone. Serres argues in this book that the parasite, the noise, the disturbance, is the source of new patterns, the premise of production of new systems and the condition for change. Noise gives rise to a new system, an order that is more complex than the simple chain. The exchanger is a builder, systems work because they do not work. Nonfunctioning remains essential for functioning. He shows how the scale of cause and effect do not always correspond. How a small parasite can cause a small effect, reinsuring the state, or how this same small parasite might as well announce a total change. There is no such thing as a balance of exchange.

In reference to the case in Xian Cun, one can think of how the urban village represents a capacity of change to a different degree compared with the surrounding city. It is constituted with open systems allowing ambiguity. These open systems will include parasites. The parasite can be a producer and an inducer, thus these open systems can still be good systems even though they face interruption. The interruption and the noise can be constructive elements adapting to the systems, or can be causes for constructive changes; a little happiness or a total catastrophe.

Serres (1980) explains how the parasite operates in silence as an observer. The parasite is small and silent but he can still cause big changes. Our fear of change and fear of possibility of change can be seen in relation to this. Fearing and trying to eradicate all disturbance and parasites in a system will not benefit the constructive relations in a society. In the case of China and Guangzhou the authorities have a strong aim of eradicating disturbance and facilitating 'harmony' in their urban planning and rural-urban relations as described in the *Introduction* chapter on migrants and urban villages. In the relations between the urban villages and the city, or between the migrant workers and the city-dwellers there is, however, a lot of disturbance and noise in the system practiced today. If noise and disturbance are the constructive elements in renewing the system or the society, what then is harmony? In Serres' argument, it represents death in its upmost consequence.

'The Parasite' shows how in the case of Xian Cun we can read the role of the migrants differently. Maybe they are 'parasites' in the sense of being constructive and productive and positive elements strengthening the system or the society through interruptions, rather than being a strain. Furthermore, this book shows how to identify several parasites among the involved. The first and most banal example of the migrants being parasites in the city is far from the only, and maybe it is also far from the most important or the clearest example. The urban village of Xian Cun is a parasite or interruption in the city. The city and its governance is parasitic or interruptive to the village, and its inner logic and practice. The village is parasitic for the daily lives of the migrants. The roles are shifting regarding who is being the parasite to whom. Everyone is in one way or another 'parasiting' the other parameters of the situation. They relate to and depend on each other as being in and of the same system, without this necessarily meaning their existence is mutually dependent.

The migrants in Xian Cun are not in opposition to the homogenizing society, yet they are seen as the interruption. They interrupted the life of the traditional village through

mass moving in. They interrupt the modernization image of the city by operating in it as if it was a village, with bicycle wagons and selling on the street in the financial district intended for malls and Mercedes. The migrants are not the only reason for change, but they are the visible impact of change. With them, positions change. The village is no longer a traditional village. Rural farmers are no longer rural farmers, but full-time rental business managers. The city with its long history is to a great extent demolished and reconstructed, which is facilitated by the 'farmer workers'. These 'farmers' work to transform the city towards its ideal harmonious modern realm, building new metro lines, highways and skyscrapers, cleaning windows and removing garbage. New patterns are evolving because of their presence and activity in the city. This activity might be as small and insignificant as moving into a shack in Xian Cun and selling shoe soles on the street, while the husband works in a car factory outside the city. Their individual stories are still part of the complex organizational systems within the city. The conditions for operating in the city are altered because of the interference of the migrants, but only in mutual influence with all the other transforming factors, ranging from the restructuring of family patterns to globalization[20].

China is a provider in world proportions, producing consumer goods at competitive prices for the world market. Cities like Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Foshan are eager to get their proportion of the wealth generated through this sector. There is therefore strong competition among the cities around the Pearl River Delta to attract investors. The cities build impressive trade centers, business hotels, and in Guangzhou's case, the business district in Tianhe is also part of this strategy. The current notion of harmony is, as described earlier, already consolidating the economic development, but with the focus on economic opportunities the perspective of harmony is challenged. As a result of the flexible migrants and the dynamic organization of the urban village, the city can perform the urban image of wealth. In this way the urban village can be seen as the institution that makes possible the city's endeavors for harmonious and economic development, while at the same time the urban village and the activities generated through it are all 'parasiting' the city when seen as an aesthetic object.

3.2.2 POWER
Zhang Li (2004) writes in her book on migrants and urban villages in Beijing, '*Strangers in the City. Reconfigurations of Space, Power and Social Networks within China's Floating*

---

20   This might seem enormous proportions, but I here build on Pun Ngai, 2005, p. 55 (as quoted in the discussion chapter), when addressing how the presence of the migrants in the city is part of a shift that challenges the society in terms of the rural-urban divide, state-society relations, restructuring the patriarchal family and class and gender relations. To this I would add the local-global aspects with migrants fuelling the world production of multinational companies on the global market.

Population' that in Chinese (Mandarin) there is no generic word for 'power'. She says her informants:

> "used two specific Chinese terms - quanli and shili - to refer to their struggle for power and social control. Quanli refers to bureaucratic power determined by one's officially appointed position; shili alludes to locality-based social and political influence, which is determined by one's wealth, social network, and personal traits. Even though people frequently draw from both types of power simultaneously in everyday life, they have very different social and political bases and thus cannot be collapsed analytically." (Zhang 2004, p. 10)

I find this distinction very interesting and relevant regarding the notion of practice and influence of power among the migrants in their marginalized position within the urban villages. This distinction means that there is a reflection implied in the use of the terms, as one has to consider how the power is being practiced or enforced before choosing the right word. It assumes one cannot talk of 'power' in China, only 'contextual power'. Maybe in this example the distinction is in fact the distinction between a practice of power and an enforcement of power? The first is a more dynamic and informal practice than the latter, which is more formal enforcement.

3.2.3   HARMONY IN RELATION TO POWER

"…the silence of the 'users' of this space. Why do they allow themselves to be manipulated in ways so damaging to their spaces and their daily life without embarking on massive revolts?" (Lefebvre 2008, p. 51).

The Chinese authorities are stressing the urge for harmony[21], while practicing a power of shifting logic, forcing the public, both the local villagers and the migrant residents, to continually invent new counteractions in their struggle to maintain a life in the urban village as exemplified in the Xian Cun case. In their everyday lives, the migrants cannot oppose the power of the authorities without being subverted by the punishment they would get in return. They need to practice their own individual and collective powers in a soft manner that causes little or no offense to make sure they can maintain their (informal) business without being disturbed. Self-control and exercise of soft power will therefore, in the case of the migrants, pair with the lesson of minimum force. Sennett writes about this approach as a civilizing process in his book about the craftsman, of

21   As described in the report '*Release of Index of the Harmonious Development in Cities of China'*, by research group in East China University of Science and Technology (ECUST) [online] Available at: http://www.ecust.edu.cn/s/2/t/31/a/5299/info.htm

handling the knife in the kitchen or around the table and not for spontaneous violence. He cites a Chinese adage: "the good cook must learn first to cleave a grain of boiled rice". Another example of this practice of power balance could be the exercise of making dumplings with the Tibetan shaking hands act described in the introduction of this chapter. In my understanding the migrant is here represented by an understanding that the practice written about as resistance in the next paragraph, here refers to practicing a civilizing process, obviously acting in positive connotations with the notion of harmony, practicing soft power and minimum force.

In the case of Xian Cun, the silence of the migrants when confronted with demolition and other harsh realities of restricted possibilities of using the outdoor spaces of the village can be explained through their understanding of power. Their resistance is thus practiced through soft power and minimum force, such as for the sole seller Xiao Meizhou. She would not gain anything from claiming a right to a place to sell her soles on the street. She would be denied this both from her fellow migrants depending on the same flexible street-use as her, and by the local authorities wanting the users to be insignificant interests. She understands that when her appearance has a minimum disturbing effect on the situation of the street use, her doings are less opposing or combative, and she can then reduce the calculated risk of being caught. Being silent and invisible is to do with minimum force. Together, all the users have in a way occupied this place with their activity, but none of them in a total way, all of them just occasionally. Continuing their doings despite the opposition to the law, but in a humble and sneaky way, is for them to practice soft power, as they do get to temporarily territorialize the area, but only if they are ready to move whenever they are confronted. Maybe the local authorities can also be said to practice soft power in this case, as they allow the activity to continue as long as it does not become too formalized. It is accepted as long as it has a temporary character. The boundaries of the law are being acted on as if it was '*shili*' and not '*quanli*', enabling both parts to actively negotiate to the limits of a common agreement on the extent of the activity, enforcing a different notion of harmony.

On a larger scale, perhaps one can even say that the migrants as a group also use this same strategy of minimum force; only temporarily territorializing the city, relying on short stays in the urban village, and never claiming more right to a place than necessary for temporary use, not only because it is a strategy, but also because this is what is expected of them, being the temporary problem, the 'floating population' with the rural hukou. The urban village is regarded as part of this temporary problem, it is allowed its appearance in the modern city as a temporary solution, but it is not regarded as a

sustainable and lasting solution.

3.2.4   DOMINATION AND APPROPRIATION OF SPACE

Domination and appropriation of space is among the core subjects in the book by Lefebvre (1974), '*Production of Space*'. Domination of space is here seen in relevance with abstract space and its reductive power, reducing social space to a formal mental space. Abstract space being the tool of domination; "Abstract space is thus repressive in essence […] its repressiveness manifested through reduction, localization and imposing of hierarchy and segregation…"(Lefebvre 2008, p. 318). "There was once such a thing as appropriation without domination …"(ibid, p. 166), but according to Lefebvre the tendency is now that domination dictates the spaces in favor of appropriation, and through this, the dominated space usually becomes closed, sterilized and vacant. According to Lefebvre, the appropriated space can be seen as modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group. Appropriation of a high order is to be found in the form of self-organization and spontaneous architecture and planning in shanty towns according to Lefebvre. These forms of appropriation "prove greatly superior to the organization of space by specialists who effectively translate the social order into territorial reality with or without direct orders from economic and political authorities" (ibid, p. 374). I choose to see the shanty town of Lefebvre not as actual, but as a term or a simplified identity, as the reality must be seen as much more complex, and more in accordance with how the urban villages in China have developed for instance, with modifications of existing fabrics, and with a multitude of interests played up against each other. When seen as spontaneous acts, I want to refer to Sennett (2008) and his book on craftsmen (see paragraph on ambiguity later in this chapter) where he writes about how improvisation is not to be seen as spontaneous acts as they are economic forms considering strain and gain. Moreover, when considering the power patterns of the urban villages we should remember how the domination within the village is not represented as one isolated power, but as several powers, occasionally working in parallel directions, and at other times in opposite directions. The example of the processes within Zhejiangcun, in Zhang Li's book (2001) as accounted for in the *Introduction* chapter on urban villages, gives a brief picture of the various agents of power within and beyond the urban village, and also accounts for the hierarchical patterns among the temporary migrant residents.

The urban village of Xian Cun was, before the partial demolition, far from closed, sterilized or emptied out. It was an arena of domination, but also of appropriation and spatial duality. As I see it, the migrants in Xian Cun appropriated the space of the urban village, not through domination, but through modifications in order to serve their

needs. The domination was split between the village government and the authorities, as they both, on different levels, imposed regulations and standards that the population interacted with. The village government and their local population were both dominating and appropriating the space of the village, however, together with the flexibility in the modifications conducted by the migrants, this complicated the dominating role of the authorities. The authorities strive for wider control and want to completely dominate the urban village. In their efforts for domination they make no distinction between the qualities of 'closed', 'sterilized' and 'emptied out' and their notion of 'harmony'.

When Lefebvre (1974) writes about abstract space, reduced space, dominant or closed space it can be compared to what Sennett in his book about the craftsman (2008) defines as 'closed system' or 'overdetermined design', as discussed in the next paragraph, and what Deleuze and Guattari (1980) describe as 'striated space', as accounted for earlier in this chapter, and when Lefebvre describes 'open space' or 'appropriation of space' it can be compared to that of an 'open system' or 'undetermined structures' in Sennett's terms and 'smooth space' or 'nomad space' in Deleuze and Guattari's terms.

"Overdetermined design rules out the crinkled fabric of buildings that allow little start-up businesses, and so communities, to grow and vibrate. This texture results from undetermined structures that permit uses to abort, swerve, and evolve" (Sennett 2009, p. 43). Sennett sees the constructive in the informal and embraces the incomplete, as the opposite is the misuse of a closed system. Later in his book he includes a chapter about innovative repairs, writing about the rebuilding of London after the big fire in 1666 where more than 200,000 Londoners were displaced. The man in charge for the reconstruction, Wren, choose not to restore the city, but used his knowledge of circulation and new ways of investigating the density of the city to create a dynamic, innovative repair incorporating incompleteness and ambiguity according to Sennett. Although, just one of several interpretations of this incident, this reading shows that appropriation is something that can be facilitated through plans and through open-ended strategies. Lefebvre had low expectations of architects' and planners' abilities to take part in the production of social space, as he found they usually "...team up with the neo capitalists to work against every possibility to create good social spaces. Planners and architects work with reductive tools, read reduced landscapes and create reduced forms…. with occasionally [!] good intentions, but treating land as empty abstractions" (Lefebvre 2008, p. 338) while "imitating or caricature the discourse of power" (Ibid, p. 361).

120

Sennett's (2008) example shows that appropriation of space, as opposed to domination of space, was implemented in planning as early as in 1666, and from my understanding it has gained more and more recognition within the planning and architectural realm in the last few decades[22]. I will not spend pages to support this view here, however, but state that although maybe it is still considered an alternative direction, it is getting closer and closer to becoming mainstream, as communities and authorities and even the World Bank participate in campaigns to strengthen local participation in planning processes[23].

Personally I do not believe in the existence of 'reduced space'[24]. To its furthest consequences all systems must be considered open systems, because the latitude of interacting humans cannot be limited by the planned domain alone. A planner can always plan for domination, but never totally escape appropriation, as people (and in my examples the migrants and local villagers) show many skills of ambiguity and creativity. With the concept of an over-dominant 'reduced space', I think Lefebvre presents humans as passive, in the sense that they submit to the systems, in contrast to actively reacting to the systems and their appropriation of power. Individuals practice various forms of resistance in relation to the appropriation of space, and this is exemplified throughout this text for the everyday use of the village in Xian Cun, but also in more extraordinary situations, for instance with the case of Zhejiangcun in Beijing accounted for by Zhang Li and in the example of the local villagers' struggle for compensation in Xian Cun throughout the demolition process, as described in the *Cases* chapter.

3.2.5 RESISTANCE AND AMBIGUITY

When writing about resistance I will build on Richard Sennett, describing a conscious resistance, and Pun Ngai broadening the arena of resistance to that of unconsciousness for the Chinese migrants.

In his book *'The Craftsman',* Sennett (2008) proposes a very constructive way of looking at resistance in relation to ambiguity not only as attitudes, but also as 'skills'. Sennett argues how resistance can be found or made. Either something blocks us or we make our own difficulties. Either way we need techniques to work well with the obstacles; we need imagination, and we need to find ways of tolerating the frustration. He means

---

22 This focus on appropriation can enrich the capacity to plan for users, but it is not sufficient to secure the users' rights.
23 Through 'Cities Alliance' – Cities without slums, for instance.
24 Reduced space is Lefebvre's term, accounted for earlier in this section as another term for abstract, dominant or closed space.

that the skills that allow people to productively dwell in frustration of the resistance are ways of recasting a problem into other terms, ways of reorienting one's expectations or readjusting one's behavior if the problem lasts longer than expected, and ways of finding the most forgiving element in a difficult situation. In my understanding, these are all techniques of handling a problem in a dynamic way that the migrants address on a daily basis. Not statically identifying the problem, and not statically defining a given method for solving it, but dynamically persisting on the open form wherein the problems and the solutions are definitively defined, and thus open for negotiations. The example of how Xiao Meizhou and her fellow migrants temporarily occupy the street to sell their goods is one such example.

When further addressing resistance, Sennett (2008) divides the sites of resistance into two types: *walls* and *membranes*. Walls can be seen as boundaries, where things end, for example a gated community. Membranes can be seen as borders or sites of exchange where organisms become more interactive. I therefore argue that the urban village and its migrant population face both resistance at sites of boundaries and borders. The urban village is handled through regulations from the city authorities defining it and reacting to it as a unity with a boundary dividing it from the city, but through the practice of its population the borders of the village become a very active edge, reacting with the city outside the village and letting the city react within the village.

After the urban village Xian Cun was forced inside the grid of the new city, many changes regarding its organization were emerging. In the old traditional village the main street was the most important street, but with the adaptation to the street grid, demolishing houses that exceeded the grid, and houses that used to be in the middle of the dense village fabric are now facing the eight-lane street of the city. The traditional village can potentially be characterized as introvert, at least in comparison to the urban village with its extrovert character. Now every house facing the city streets accommodates some sort of business, as many businesses prefer access to the road for easy transportation and contact with passing clients. Being part of this lane of houses facing the streets in a way gives the same assimilating character as the new main street, with its city, thus their market value has increased compared to the rest of the village. Businesses from outside the area, however, would never locate inside the village to get cheap, flexible conditions. Clients who would never enter the village will stop by and do their preferred trades on the street-facing premises . The only place where the village has walls and not membranes is where the city has placed its big billboards advocating a harmonious Guangzhou.

122

3.3   Fences put up around Xian Cun before the Asian Games in 2010 actively negotiated as of October 2011. Author's photographs.

Sennett argues that "Working with resistance means, in urbanism, converting boundaries into borders […] the problem is that we are better at building boundaries than borders…" (Sennett 2009, p. 229). Often we think of the center as a place to share-while in reality the borders are the active zones… "the zone in which people have to deal with difficulty…" (ibid, p. 230). This is quite apparent in Xian Cun, as the center of the village is a quiet and introverted place for the local villagers to recuperate in the elderly center while the constant negotiations with the city take place in the border zones, where people living in the village (local villagers and migrants) interact with people and regulations of the city.

I would argue that migrants seek to subvert the regulative boundaries of the village and city by acting as if it was a negotiable border. I will give one example of how this conversion is done in practice: I talked to the wagon bike delivery men waiting for new commissions outside the village near the entrances of the old main street. They talked about how they had not been allowed to drive their wagons in the city's traffic since 2006, when the use of motorcycles and other light vehicles obstructing the car traffic was prohibited in the city of Guangzhou. Bicycles were allowed in the traffic, but not with

123

wagons. Inside the narrow lanes of the village, cars could not enter and the wagon bikes were the only way to transport heavy loads. Waiting for new clients by the entrances of the village was not illegal, as it could be seen as internal transportation. Despite the regulations though, the wagon bikes were also the preferred means of transportation of goods to and from the village by most customers because of the low price. During the daytime they would mostly cycle in and around the urban village, or if cycling in the business district, they would try to avoid the main streets and large controlled crossroads. In the evenings, however, when the rush hour traffic was calming and the enforcement of the law was less strict, they would neglect the laws and cycle all over the city, distance depending on time and strain, not on regulations. From time to time they would be caught. Everyone I talked to had been caught. What they then negotiated for was a fine, paid directly to the policeman. This would often be considered more as a bribery, as the policeman would keep the money and give them a false receipt, but leave their vehicle and the goods. If they were unlucky the policeman would transcribe a real fine and confiscate the bike and/or the goods. A wagon bike could be bought for about 200 Yuan, which was a considerable share of a month's salary for a delivery man, and it was a personal investment. During the transportation the deliveryman was also responsible for the value of the goods, thus the job was risky once they broke the law. The traffic in the area was really bad, but the wagon bikes were not to blame. As they operated regardless of the law, they were sneaky in a humble and silent way, not contributing to queues or traffic jams or offending pedestrians, acting very differently from the aggressive car drivers.

3.4   Delivery men waiting for new assignments outside Xian Cun, 2008. Author's photograph.

3.5   Billboard workshop/home: Dual work/resident unit in Xian Cun 2008. Author's photograph.

I further want to argue that borders become boundaries and vice versa in a time and space sharing system in the urban village. A border is never only a border, and a boundary is never only a boundary. When the situation allows for negotiations, the boundary will immediately become a border. This way the wagon bikes can operate in the entire financial district at night because of the time and space sharing of interests but, like the mice flee the feast when disturbed, they have to hurry home when the morning rush starts and the police are back on guard. A different example of time and space sharing could be the organization of the sign workshops along the south end street of the village. Most of these enterprises are family businesses with migrants from Hunan, and they are organized as dual private/commercial spaces, as the family members all live in the workshop. They are also organized as a flexible work/relaxing area, as some work while others cook, take care of children, watch TV or talk. When they open the gate in the

morning you see into a home with a big dining table in the center. They finish breakfast one by one, put their chair in the corner and bring out the sign materials and the paint. The big table is stored away when the rice soup is finished as the floor is needed for the signs and clients. The workshops are organized in a flexible way, and also the location along the main city grid provides flexibility regarding operating modes similar to that of the wagon bikers. I believe the migrants depend on this type of flexibility due to the lack of domination of the space. They are so marginalized, and the limited resources in the village are already so densely exploited, that without this flexibility in time and space sharing their limited powers would leave them no latitude.

3.2.6   PRACTICE OF TRANSGRESSION

In her findings related to resistance practiced by Chinese migrants on the shop floor of the factory, Pun Ngai (2005) remarks how resistance and practices of transgression in the workplace were formed by creative attempts to develop everyday tactics to confront disciplinary power, to reverse male control in certain situations and to cope with everyday pressures. She describes how the bargaining power was used in busy times and how collective illness was common if speeds were set too high and the bonus rate was too harsh. They would not only use force to fight for wages but also for cultural activities, such as the possibility to listen to radio during their night shifts. These are all types of resistance one can understand and expect, but in the last part of her book, '*Made in China. Women Factory Workers in a Global Work Place',* Ngai (2005) describes how the very possibility of resistance lies in the borderline between the consciousness and unconsciousness, and how she discovered a different, minor genre of resistance there. The working girls or '*dagongmei*' she focuses on, find their lives are out of their own control as they are displaced by a triple oppression of the machines of state socialism, global capitalism and patriarchy. Their reactions are not reactions to extreme work pressure alone, but to this complex and hopeless situation. She discovered that some dealt with it during their sleep, dreaming and screaming. Others would react with illnesses, like heavy menstrual pains resulting in fainting. Their reactions were individually expressed and uncontrolled. It was their bodies doing the resistance; "The painful body is not the defeated body but rather the resistant body" (Pun Ngai 2005, p. 22).

From my talks with the migrants in Xian Cun, I have no examples of this type of resistance, but I am sure one can find many cases displaying similar 'painful bodies'. Even though the urban village provides a more flexible frame for the individual life than the factory work and dormitory life, the village cannot provide any sense of safety/security for the

individuals. For the migrants living in the urban village while working in the financial district, the disciplinary power is demarcated to the workspace, leaving the workers with a private domain in the village. This domain is also oppressive, although not part of the same institution, as is the case for the factory dormitories. I therefore argue that the inhabitants of the urban village suffer from the same triple oppression as the ones living in the factory dormitories, the main difference being that this oppression has a more multifaceted and diffuse appearance for the ones in the village as it is not mainly the company constituting this oppressive power, but a wider shift of house owners, village or street authorities and the broader appearance of the diverse institutions of the city.

"Dagongmei as a cultural-symbolic artifact contains a set of reactive forces that try to homogenize human activities and senses of self that should be plural, fluid, and fragmentary. The process of homogenization is a process of exclusion and displacement, which produces anxiety, inflicts pain, and drives individuals to integrate into the collective will of the hegemonic construct." (Pun Ngai 2005, p. 114)

3.2.7 AMBIGUITY

As a continuation of the paragraph on resistance I will continue to build on Sennett (2008) regarding ambiguity. He sees resistance and ambiguity in connection with each other, as the inventiveness is needed to solve difficulties. Seen together it provides techniques that contrary to simplification and rationalization work with imagination to make sense of potent tools and complex possibilities. People can become better at negotiating borders and edges (resistance), and they can become more selective about the elements they choose to vary (ambiguity). In his book *'The Craftsman',* Sennett has a short section about ambiguity, first as anticipation, explaining how ambiguity can be created through "fuzzy logic", or how one can plan for ambiguity as a designer. His second focus is on improvisation as a user's craft, drawing on the metamorphosis of type-form over time. Another way to explain these two focuses is that, just like resistance, ambiguity can be found or made. The skill of handling a situation with innovating moves is different from planning for ambiguity to happen.

Using improvisation is not a spontaneous act in the sense that it represents mindless occurrence. People who improvise street use will follow rules when they improvise. They deal with limitations, resistance and strain, and improvise an economical form, like when making the dumplings. Sennett (2008) writes about Bernard Rudofsky who studied skilled use of ambiguity in streets and stoops among immigrant dwellers in New York's Lower East Side, and who also documented how forms developed through

improvisation in many different cultures, in his book *'Architecture without Architects'*. He refers to how Rudofsky thought that:

"this hidden order is how most settlements of poor people develop and that the work of improvising street order attaches people to their communities, whereas 'renewal' projects, which may provide a cleaner street, pretty houses and large shops, give the inhabitants no way to mark their presence on the space." (Sennett 2009, p. 237)

This is pretty much the same argument as given by Jane Jacobs on the threats of renewal projects within Greenwich Village in her book '*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*' from 1961.

The urban village in its current dense form has evolved through negotiations or improvisation among the people living in the village. A large proportion of the inhabitants are migrants with little or no impact on the transformation of the built form, but through entrepreneurship migrants do of course take part in negotiating space, using improvisation. Not threatening in a revolutionary way, but in a rebellious way, stretching the limits of the locally agreed habits. Throughout the last 30 years, it has been seen that the extremely economical form of the urban village has been improvised and developed by the local villagers, in constant reaction with the migrants and the shifting regulations for maximum possible exploitation. The same thing has happened simultaneously in most villages located in places where migrants might reside, creating this new urban typology of shaking hands villages (see the *Introduction* chapter for more on the evolvement of urban villages and the *Cases* chapter for examples of the transformation of different villages). The rural village would once be built with volume in accordance with principles of natural ventilation and handling the heat in the best possible way, while the extensions of the urban village era ignored these factors and simply exploited the plots in the most efficient way. One cannot talk about the positive impacts of improvisation given by Rudofsky in this new built form (other than lucky incidents), but perhaps one can talk about skilled improvisation regarding how these dense and difficult urban fabrics are inhabited. It is not the built form expressing ambiguity, but the practice of using it. The built form generates resistance, and it is handled through ambiguity. Sennett describes how one can think of the creation of ambiguity as a special instance of applying minimum force, and in this regard it links to the practice of the migrants in the village and their way of tackling the built form. The importance in understanding the form of ambiguity practiced by the migrants in the urban village, however, is that it is a type of forced ambiguity, as the migrants cannot

afford to ignore a single vagueness or clearing in the practiced policy. The urban village provides them with a roof, but in order to survive one has to be street-smart and cannot refrain from the possibilities of providing for a more decent life through ambiguity.

Regarding the anticipation of ambiguity, Sennett uses the design processes of Aldo van Eyck as an example. He and his team were building playgrounds on vacant plots in Amsterdam with an intentional lack of clear boundaries. These 'street pocket parks' taught "children how to anticipate and manage ambiguous transitions in urban space" (Sennett 2009, p. 232), managing threats of climbing and dangers of traffic by learning how to behave and negotiate in the city instead of protecting or isolating the children from these challenges. The lack of clear physical definitions provided a challenge, and the skills developed through practicing the negotiation of boundaries are skills of ambiguity. Regarding the urban village, the city authorities want to stress the clear boundaries, while the practice and activity of the village subvert the boundaries through diverse practices.

When seen in isolation, the urban village is not planned with the intention of ambiguity, but when seen in relation to the city, the urban village represents ambiguity in the urban realm. One way to see this is maybe that while it is not planned for ambiguity, it is also not planned for homogeneity. There is only one motive in the planning strategy of the urban village, and that is the economic considerations. For the Chinese city, the economic considerations are predominant, but at least there is some sort of superstructure, some sort of concept directing the development of the city apart from, or in conjunction with, economic interests. Harmony is one such notion directing the development of the city, but also more specific guidelines of a visual axis, efficiency in the road network, heritage preservation and green area developments are interests considered for improving the urban structure.

What are the impacts of this total unambitiousness of the urban village? Does it open up for new ways of using the space? At least it opens up for a discussion on what this un ambitiousness results in. Since the cost is the only parameter defining the space, other considerations become random. The social space is a coincidence in the urban village. Also terms like fellowship are reduced in meaning to conformity. The planning aims for conformity, as this is the only thing left for the common to agree about. Ambiguity becomes the opposite of fellowship in this argument.

I have already mentioned the old main street in Xian Cun where Xiao Meizhou sells

her soles. This place used to be an important widening of the road, just where the Confucian school was located. Now the school building houses the cycle garage and the area outside is used by random street vendors. The old village structure has lost its meaning in the current use, but unlike developed areas in the city, where the old has been demolished and the new program is dominating the plan and its execution, this dual form of traditional program and new use creates a complexity that opens up for negotiations. The negotiable space is in the urban village a result of coincidences, when some remnants of the old village structure interact with the new housing estates. Through the (unintended) ambiguity the village is opposing harmony, ambiguity in itself becomes resistance against the notion of harmony.

3.2.8   OUT OF PLACE AND PUT IN PLACE

In regard to the migrants' relation to the city, I find Tamara Jacka's notions of "emplacement through social control" relevant. In her book '*Rural Women in Urban China. Gender, Migration and Social Change*' (2006), she argues how the social control consequently places people both in particular relationships with other people and with their physical environment (Jacka 2006). In the case of China, she argues how the hukou system and its supplementing regulations act as this form of control, through emplacement that makes migrants feel both marginalized and "out of place" within the urban sphere. At the same time their spatial practice is restricted and subordinated, meaning they are "put in place" within the city. The story of the wagon cyclists' operations within the financial district of Tianhe earlier in this chapter can function as an example of this, as the delivery men's activity is clearly restricted on multiple levels, reasoning why they operate both in and out of place.

In general, migrants, as rural citizens temporarily residing in the city, are "out of place" in many ways. When renting an apartment inside a confined urban village, either on the outskirts of the city or in more central areas, they find themselves in neglected, rural migrant enclaves, not representing the wanted image of the modern Chinese city. If the village is visible from outside, it is as a thorn in the eye of the wanted 'harmonious image' of the city. If the village is hidden behind fences depicting the idealized city, it is an image that shows a modernization that does not include villages in the city. It is not difficult to find examples of this when looking at the ways the authorities are handling the villages. During the preparations for the Asian Games in Guangzhou in 2010 for instance, we could witness a wide range. In the *Context* and *Cases* chapters I have accounted for how some villages were demolished, some were hidden behind fences, some were hidden behind newly planted trees or the entire villages were painted in standard pale yellow

and had the same fake tilted rooftops attached all over.

With a migrant perspective on marginalized housing in the city, the urban villages and the construction sites are the most visible migrant housing within the city. While the urban villages take up approximately 20% of the land of the urban area in Guangzhou, they accommodate about 70% of the migrant population, which again constitute about 40% of the entire population in the city (Lin *et al.* 2011)[25]. Many migrants, both residing in the village and coming from outside, find their work, networks, social scene and everyday services within the urban village. There are, however, many more invisible migrant housing forms further strengthening the migrants' marginality within the city. This goes for instance for the migrant women working as maids and isolated in their employers' apartments, but also the waitresses who sleep on the restaurant floors or tables at night, the factory workers living in the dormitories and the cleaners in the large offices living in dormitories in the basements of the office blocks (Jacka 2006, p. 104).

One can see how migrants' locales are eradicated "out of place", when for instance urban villages and other migrant enclaves are demolished and forced relocation of migrants is conducted without compensation and on short notice in many cases, as part of 'clean up and comb out' campaigns for example (Siu 2007). This, according to Jacka, contributes to the highly disruptive alienation of the migrants, and the sense that they are not wanted and are "out of place" in the city (Jacka 2006, p. 103).

3.2.9 TRANSLOCALITY

I wish to conclude this chapter by drawing the connection from Deleuze and Guattari's thoughts on nomad space by building on Brickell and Datta and their conceptualizing of 'translocality' as argued in their book '*Translocal Geographies. Spaces, Places, Connections*' (2011). Resisting looking at mobility and migration as uprooted, dislocated or traveling, Brickell and Datta suggest in their book that we "situate the mobile subjective".

To ground the multi-scalar situatedness of migrant experiences through different scales of movement, regional, rural, urban, neighborhood, homes and bodies, Brickell and Datta find the notion of *habitus* (Bourdieu) useful as a way to bridge across structure and agency, as the habitus approach "...produces a negotiation in the field which takes

---

25   Lin builds on Li, J. F. (2004) *The Renewal of 'Village in the City'*. Beijing: Science Press.
Only migrants staying for more than six months in the city are included in official population estimates so the migrant population in the urban villages is in reality even higher.

shape through exchange across different types of capital- social, cultural and symbolic" (Brickell and Datta 2011, p. 11). Datta and Brickell further build on Georg Marcus (1989) and Smith (2001) who first called for a multi-sited transnational ethnography that looked at translocal linkages and interconnections, focusing on the 'multi-positionality' of the migrants and their local-local connections.

While space has been a central point in migration literature, in pointing to "otherness" (Sandercock 1998) for instance, translocality is here introduced as a way to situate the deterritorialized notion of transnationalism, that is deterritorialized imaginings of mobility and displacement in regard to migrants' socio-spatial experiences. Brickell and Datta here point to Appadurai (1996) and Hannerz (1998) where translocality becomes an agency-oriented approach towards migrant experiences that broadens the earlier focus on social networks and economic exchange in an attempt to address the spatial processes and identities within local-local relations. Through this shift in focus abstract transit spaces are turned into tangible transit places according to Brickell and Datta. Migrants encountered as 'others' challenge the groundedness through their various positionings within actual places. "During movement, spaces and places are invested with 'heightened material and conceptual significance' (Cairns 2004, p. 30), making them important bases for cultural understandings of relatedness" (Brickell and Datta 2011, p. 6). Examples of this are how pictures of home have a significance during migrants' movements, as seen in the visual contributions by the participating migrants in the *Photo Documentation Project* in the *Cases* chapter, or how even a casual temporarily territorialized corner plays a role in belongingness, as seen in the case of the curving in the old main road of Xian Cun in the *Cases* chapter.

What I find useful in Brickell and Datta's approach is that when replacing the transnational focus, often used when looking at migration and mobility, with a situated translocal focus, this enables us to look at a multi-sited and multi-scalar situatedness that does not subsume within a hierarchy of national or global context, but rather captures the socio-spatial processes of localized contexts and everyday practices in migrant experiences. Through the translocal approach, Brickell and Datta put the attention on the multiple and hybrid stories that go beyond economic exchange, political organizations or social networks to look into the various negotiations of space and place in-between. They build on Burawoy (2000) when they stress that one can aim to provide ways to understand not just micro processes but also macro forces through an understanding of the local as situated in a network of spaces, places and scales, where identities are negotiated and transformed in a local site of exchange. In this context, spaces are seen as related to the

local-local connections in ways that relate to translocality at different scales, as the local is not constructed at any certain scale, but function as a multi-local asset, constructed, politicized and relevant in everyday lives on numerous scales (Brickell and Datta 2011).

The theory and method of the translocal geographies are valuable in the sense that they open up for other and new ways of examining the connections of spaces and places related to migration as local-local journeys, and not just across spaces and scales like rural-urban or inter-regional. In regard to methods proposed by Brickell and Datta they are related to subjective spatial narratives, and can be seen as relevant in regard to the methods used in the *Photo Documentation Project*. I will come back to this in the *Methods* chapter when discussing the narrative approach and in the *Cases* chapter when addressing the *Photo Documentation Project*. Here however is an example of how the pictures of Mr Wang can be understood within a translocal focus of relating to multi-scalar localities:

Mr Wang is a work-injured migrant, participating in the *Photo Documentation Project*. Through several contributions his images express his subjective positioning regarding his life in the city, his role as a migrant and his relation to his hometown village. He shared his knowledge of, and pride in, his heritage through presenting a massive series of pictures of traditional agrarian tools he saw in a museum, talking about his practice of using them. Showing them out of context, but presenting them in context, he expressed how he was surprised the tools were presented in a museum in the city, while his relatives were still using them actively in the fields.

Through one of his photo stories he presented how other work-injured migrants returning to his hometown managed to establish a livelihood in the countryside on their own, building up a mushroom factory. In his pictures he confronted his subjects, with a face-to-face approach making the people he photographed take part in their subjective positioning, considering their integrity, while presenting their difficulties. He smiled as he said he was the only migrant worker that was allowed to enter the closed ceremonies at the international photo festival in Lianzhou, because of his participation in the *Photo Documentation Project*. He was accepted as a professional photographer as he was carrying a camera and an attitude of confidence. In the festival he photographed the exhibitions to share with the other participants; pictures of hardworking migrants and the work of a handless photographer, showing how both his subjective story and his participation in the *Photo Documentation Project* was part of broadening the plural narrative of his self-reflection and self-representation, as he as a migrant actively draws

from his place-defined plural identities and multi-local situatedness.

I will also use his example to talk about orientation, to the political and social issues within the city and the life and family he has left in the hometown. In both the agrarian and the urban villages the orientation is in many ways drawn elsewhere, with migrants and local residents working outside the village and turning towards a transforming urban local neighborhood, the city, their hometown and beyond. The boundaries of the neighborhood are expanded, hybrid and fluid. In his contributions he always reminded us of his many orientations; his migrant fellows in the city, his family, blooming fruit trees in his hometown and the aspects of cultural continuation, as his life went on, as he brought along his background, as a farmer in the city, and as a migrant worker in the countryside. His story was a subjective interpretation of his diverse and plural urban ambitions, while it also represented his embodied belonging in the city, with his migrant friends and in his hometown with his family. It was not a story of the uprooted, as the many different places he related to created an intertwined context. When he went back to his hometown after finding no new jobs in the city during the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, it was to join the mushroom factory that he had presented to us while he was still working in the city.

3.6   Selection of Mr. Wang's pictures. *Photo Documentation Project (opposite page).*

3.3 REMARKS

The migrants are not a mirage, vaguely positioning themselves within the temporality and liminality of the city. On the contrary, through the many subjective stories I have presented and will present throughout this text I hope to have shown how the urban village in the city is an arena where the migrant residents, through their everyday practice and attitude, subvert diverse boundaries, not only that of the urban-rural divide, but equally important that of their own subjective experience of belonging and connecting to various multi-scalar urban spheres, through local-local relations, within and beyond the urban village where they reside.

When focusing on the migrants' relation to urban villages and the surrounding city of Guangzhou, in times of extensive redevelopment and demolishing, I want to question what inhabitation is and what situatedness in this landscape in flux is. While the urban village grant migrants an ability to sustain their basic needs, and tend to become migrant neighborhoods, I would argue that we need to look at the mobile migrants as situated within a multi-sited urban landscape, and not put them in place within the borders of an urban village, as their locales need to be seen as multi-scalar.

Throughout the following chapters I will therefore discuss the situatedness of migrants within and beyond the city, as their identity as migrants on the move does not rest when they cross the city gate, but continues to affect their subjective spatial positioning within the city. I want to question:
- how the migrants position themselves within the transforming urban ambience.
- how the presence and the influence of migrant agency contribute to transforming the social fabric and physical space of the urban village and surrounding city.
- and what role the urban village plays in the migrants' situating in the overall city.

Bridging the thoughts of temporary territorialization of a place as a means to subvert the diverse boundaries, and not only that of the urban-rural divide, with the thoughts of situating within the multi-sited and multi-scalar localities, enables us to see how through their negotiations the migrants can be said to trespass boundaries just as much through their ability to connect and interlink. Consequently, through their practice, the migrants are challenging the massive temporality of the urban ambience through a multi-local situatedness that relates to both the urban village and the city beyond. With this as a partial premise, one can find a starting point to ground a spatial inclusion for the migrants in the city[26].

26   Encountering both social and economic factors.

RESEARCH METHOD
THEORY, APPROPRIATION AND PROCESS

In his book '*The Craftsman*', Sennett (2008, p. 182-193) describes three different authors of food recipes; one of them, Madame Benshaw, an Iranian woman having cooking classes in French cuisine in New York, could not speak English very well, but Sennett, attending her classes, wrote how she expressed the meaning of the way to treat the ingredients to get the most out of the potential of the dish. She used metaphors in her written instructions. This is not so uncommon in Iranian tradition. For the Poulet à la d'Albufera she wrote [and Sennett added the words in brackets]:

> "Your dead child. [the chicken]. Prepare him for new life. [bone] Fill him with the earth. [stuff] Be careful! He should not overeat. [stuff lightly] Put on his golden coat. [brown before baking] You bathe him. [prepare the poaching liquor] Warm him but careful! A child dies from too much sun. [cooking temperature: 130 Celsius] Put on his jewels. [once cooked, pour the sweet-pepper sauce] This is my recipe." (Sennett 2008, p. 190)

Although this recipe aims for a given result, and a given procedure, it opens up for readings and analysis on how to treat the ingredients. Sennett argues how these metaphors are to be read as tools to consciously and intensely contemplate the process of stuffing, browning or setting the oven. These are images of preparing, creating commands that "alerts the hand" (Sennett 2008, p. 191). To me if a method induces an alert it is a good method.

Before I read about Madame Benshaw I thought of the limitations of thinking of methods as recipes. I have never stuck rigidly to a recipe in the kitchen, so I was looking for readings of methods that would allow for a more open process. The city and the causes of change I want to study are also not like fixed ingredients, which should be measured and mixed like the ingredients of a meal. They are transforming, dynamic and fluid, but how does one grasp this with a recipe? The example of Madame Benshaw's recipe hints at a process that treats the ingredients subjectively. It takes you through a procedure from A to Z, but still in an open form that requests you to look at your relation to the ingredients as the guiding line and not the recipe in itself. To me, that is a good recipe, and a good framework for a method as it is preparing for a process that will leave the performer with a personal responsibility to adjust the means to the subjects and the situation and through this process to learn something about the means in general beyond what is revealed in the recipe. It is challenging in a good way as it opens up for improvisation, but points to the threats and demands responsibility.

This way of approaching method can be seen in relation to the views I present in the *Theory* chapter when discussing the poststructuralist approach; addressing a method that not merely tries to understand the object but just as much can be described as a study of how knowledge is produced, working without a unified core position.

The two documentation projects I account for in the *Cases* chapter, *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project,* exemplify for me this process of elaborating a method that started off as an overly detailed recipe with a proposal that I handed to the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center along with the cameras. It proposed regular meetings, discussions of pictures and a procedure of filing and sending all material back to the researcher. I had proposed ways for everything to be handled with a filing system for the computer for every individual to store their pictures in separate files, a reference system and concrete examples of how to go about running the meetings. Those suggestions were largely ignored by the participants. Luckily I had also elaborated both orally in discussions and in text the intentions of every procedure I wanted them to perform, and for them that part was more useful as a recipe; for every procedure the participants and my research assistant themselves proposed alternative ways to handle the process throughout, which proved more flexible and robust in terms of more efficient time consumption and ensuring their attendance. The form of the meetings and the form of the filing and sending were altered for various reasons throughout, and the participants therefore became engaged in shaping the method of the projects.

4.0.2 ON RELATION TO PRACTICE AND CONCEPTION

Since my background is as a practicing architect with a practitioner-centered education focusing on practical methods rather than the theory, I tend to think of every task as one of construction, not only as something physical and built, but as constructions of ideas and processes. Our school days were filled with talks of open form, but still urging us to persist on defining a concept of identity and proposition. Through the constructional experiences and talks we had in the office I later worked in, an approach was elaborated that centered around dealing with difference rather than with identity, in topological conceptions where qualities of a situation were seen to be its capacity of change and latitude. As a reaction to these experiences I found it interesting to read that Deleuze and Guattari, in their book '*What is Philosophy*?' (1994) talk of concepts of ideas as metaphysical constructions that define thinking. To them, concepts are not identity conditions or propositions. In this way practical and artistic production resembles production of philosophy, but only if we let ourselves be challenged by a method and a process that allows us to deal with the open-ended form, and not as restricted by an

identity-defined concept[1].

I have also been inspired in the approach to method by Mirjana Lazanovska (2010), an architect and researcher on migrant housing in Australia and Macedonia who talks of her method of research as an "archi-textual framework", were she builds on typical methodological tools from architectural practice such as maps, plans, sections, elevations, sketches and/or photographs and set them alongside narratives and spatial practice that she observes among the inhabitants and migrants. This framework she uses together with a theoretical toolkit to allude to a more universal problem of migrant housing, as presented in her speech *'House and Dwelling in the Flows of Migration'* (Lazanovska 2010). Although in this research I have not worked much with drawings, but more with photos that visualize the spatial qualities I have observed, I think aspects of such a spatially read archi-textual framework can be seen, especially in the way I address Tianhe district in the *Context* chapter and the way I address the built fabric of the urban villages in the *Cases* chapter when looking at the ways the urban villages change their way of confronting the surrounding built fabric via fences for instance.

4.0.3 MONOGRAPH

I decided early on that I wanted to write a monograph and not articles as I wanted a textual framework that could include the many distractions and lines of consideration that I found to impact the process and the findings, where a monograph is defined as a "detailed scholarly study of one subject" (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary). In my understanding this one subject can still be granted a generous format where aspects that perhaps seem irrelevant or of minor importance should also be given their share of space, as I think a text like this should reflect a process that is not always streamlined from the initial thought to the final result. I have often seen that observations or small trials I have done that seem minor at first are the ones that I find most interesting or useful in the longer run.

I had neither written articles nor a monograph, and I had never written anything of length in English before I started this PhD so it was in every respect a fresh start where I had no presumptions about what would work best. The format has had two roles as I elaborated the research through the writing process, while working on the communication of the research with text and illustrations. I have reflected greatly on how to communicate the research as a whole, through text that works on different levels to exemplify and

---

1   Exemplified in the first part of the *Theory* chapter (3.1.1.c), when addressing smooth space as an immersion of intense spatiality rather than extensionality for instance.

illustrate so as to grasp the broader picture of plurality in the ambience of the cases, the analysis and the discussion. The order and logic of the text has been intended and considered from the start, but are still in most cases a result of a series of movements of fragments and seldom a result of following initial plans. It has been a struggle to not let too many distractions lead the course of the text, as through this research I have collected so many observations that I would like to include. The more detailed I get with the writing, the less I have looked at previous notes about the order and plan, and the more I have allowed the content and order to emerge along the way. For me, this has been one of the most fascinating and inspiring parts of this writing process, as it is at least a start of something that I can recognize as projecting; projecting a thought, with a line of text.

4.0.4   ASSEMBLAGE

Deleuze and Guattari (1980) write of a book that "there is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 4). They talk of capacities in books that inspire and show the potential of the format when they say: "In a book, as in all things there are lines of articulation or segmentary, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification" (ibid, p. 4). In their argument a book could be an assemblage and a multiplicity. They talk of the depth of a book and the structure beyond structure. This depth in context corresponds to how I want to communicate my research in the monograph; integrating process and product, thought and construction in a text that is defined by measures different from itself.

They continue to talk of approaches that a book can take. It can be a classical book or what they call a root-book, with logic of the world-tree, "imitating the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do. The law of the book is the law of reflection, the One that becomes Two" (ibid, p. 5). This logic of a law that resides in nature, while the same law presides over the division between the book and the world/nature/art is limited by its dualism in Deleuze and Guattari's meaning. When trying to make this simple form open for multiplicity the traditional world-tree could be replaced with a taproot, but also this root or this book is reduced in potential due to its law of structure to that of a fascicular system. It has achieved the multiple, but not without sacrifice. "Whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure, its growth is offset by a reduction in its laws of combinations" (ibid, p. 6). Thus, to accomplish a book that manages to capture how the one belongs to the multiple they propose a book that is a rhizome. The botanical form of a rhizome, potato for instance, is

different from regular roots and radicle/taproots, in that it assumes very diverse forms. Roots and radicles may be rhizomorphic. Also related to connection and heterogeneity, Deleuze and Guattari claim that for a rhizome "any point […] can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (ibid, p. 7). Further, the characteristics of a rhizome are that of an assemblage, containing the capacity to "increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections" (ibid, p. 9). In such a rhizome/book they say one can hope to establish a map rather than a tracing, as the map can be seen as having multiple entryways, and can be read as "open and connectable in all of its dimensions; detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modifications" (ibid, p. 13). The tracing, however, will handle the map and translate it into an image and as a result transform the rhizome into roots and radicles. It will organize, stabilize and neutralize the "multiplicities according to the axes of significance and subjectification belonging to it" (ibid, p. 15). This is a threat to every text, and every process of research, and the process of writing should therefore strive instead to "plug the tracing back into the map, connect the roots or trees back up with the rhizome" (ibid, p. 15).

To me it seems to be a constructive way of approaching not only text but also research and representation as a rhizome, and to show how these different approaches can share the challenge of conveying an assemblage. This approach interlinks the theoretical foundation with the methodological and representational foundations. Presenting the research as an assemblage of subjective positionings does not reproduce a world but rather assembles it in heterogeneity within intermezzo, corresponding to the many individual voices and narratives that ground the findings of this research. In this way the plural voices of the *Photo Documentation Project* for instance can come to position themselves in a grand narrative while continuing on their subjective agency.

4.0.5   ALL IS DATA

My way of working with an urban context has in many ways been in line with the 'grounded theory approach' as described first by Glaser and Strauss (1967). To Glaser "all is data" (Glaser 1998, p. 145) in the sense that there is always more data that could "correct the categories with more relevant properties" (ibid, p. 145). After the conceptualizing of data through collecting, coding and analyzing, "the product will be transcending abstraction, NOT accurate description" (Glaser 2002).

I started with data collection as a broad and diverse process. Including 'everything' like the German photographer Wolfgang Tillmans, who exhibited his works under the title

'If one thing matters, everything matters' at Tate Britain in 2003. Not uncritically to load everything into this project, but to see the relevance and illustrative potential within a broad scope of sources and subjects; from individual and subjective interpretations and personal observations to public announcements and government resolutions to philosophical ideas and computer simulations. While I have collected material from a broad base throughout the process I have focused on certain aspects more systematically to persevere with those fields of discussions. While I collected all manner of input from the *Photo Documentation Project* for instance, I have systematically applied selective readings of the material when addressing topics like positioning, home and belonging. The strengthened focus throughout has also led me to look more precisely at certain angles that can expand and add to the topic in question. Through the various approaches I have tried to comprehend the complexity in interpretations of the urban ambience and the diversity in migrant perspectives. One example of interpretations of the urban ambience is when I include the process of how I made the gingerbread house to illustrate the global aspirations in the Tianhe neighborhood, as described in the *Context* chapter and an example of the diversity in migrant perspectives is the account of the use of the old main shopping street in Xian Cun, used in the *Theory* chapter as an example of time and space sharing of interests. This place has displayed very different uses, which allows for various spatial readings as I have returned to observe and interview users of the place around the clock, on a yearly basis. The observation and documentation of shift in use is one important parameter in my data collection, which is important also because it manages to capture the dynamic parameters in the use of space and emphasizes how the observations I make are not representing static forms but dynamic and transforming relations.

My focus on migrants' own interpretation of situation has been enforced throughout the years, with continuous data collection and now represents one of the main perspectives. The data I have collected in this field, through the many photos and accounts of presentations in the *Photo Documentation Project* and the blog diary, the questionnaires and the interviews from the *House Rent Project*, have proved to be of a kind that is easily interlinked in various ways to be coded and analyzed and used to illustrate various theoretical concepts. While in this research I have only used the material to address migrant positioning in regard to home and belonging, I think of the material as a continuous source for future studies within other topics as well.

4.0.6   PARTICIPANT APPROACH

In this research there are many participants. Unlike Pun Ngai (2004), I have not lived in

a dormitory or worked in a sweatshop. I have always been the outsider; the architect, teacher and researcher coming from abroad to look into their whereabouts. In my approach to observations I have been a participant observer. I have not been invisible, but inflicted on the surroundings I look at with my presence. I have been aware of this position all the time, but have not been able to escape it, and therefore I chose to be an active participant reflecting on what I see and how my presence is responded to, sometimes using active inflictions for instance through initiating projects where I go in dialogue with the surroundings and with the subjects of my interest. As later described, the assistants and translators I have used have also been participants in the observations and the projects, contributing actively to the research. In the *Photo Documentation Project* and *House Rent Project* the migrant volunteers have been engaged participants in both documenting for the projects, but also in reflecting on their contributions and in contributing with ideas on how to convey the collaboration and how to proceed or transform the projects to better suit their situation. They have all changed the course of the projects and the course of the research with their participation.

4.0.7   TIME, PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

The aspect of time has for me been relevant when collecting data related to urban transformation. I have carried out five field work studies within a period of five years between 2007 and 2011. I visited Xiao Zhou village in 2005 and Shigang Xi Cun in 2006, and I have included impressions from those visits as they represent interesting standards and pictures of a period that can function with reference to the more recent observations made done during my PhD period. During my stays I have visited the same places over and over again, and when possible also talked to the same people over and over again to be able to document aspects of change.

Doing a PhD about urban development in China when mostly stationed in Norway of course has its drawbacks related to presence. To compensate I have used a research assistant in China to conduct data collecting projects that have had a long-term perspective, running for the entire period of my PhD continuously providing me with updated data and impressions. The *Photo Documentation Project* was launched during the first summer of my PhD, the *House Rent Project* was with me from the start, and I have requested frequent reports from Xian Cun before and during the demolition process by my research assistant who has visited the village regularly when I have been in Norway. Receiving the many photos from the *Photo Documentation Project* when I have been in Norway has been a constant reminder that the situation is in constant flux, for both the participants in question and the urban environment they relate to. The city

I left is never the city I return to.

4.1 A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

My project and process is solidly placed within the qualitative domain, but not in a sense of refusing the value of quantitative approaches, as I refer to and build upon studies that have a quantitative approach when trying to grasp the dynamics of the transformation of the city. I find it very interesting to know where migrants reside and for how long, where they come from and where they move to. In the case of Xian Cun the local authorities collected most of this information through their migrant registration office, but since the situation of Xian Cun was regarded as being very sensitive, they would not allow me to look into this data. I have therefore only been able to use their general comments released through the annual reports of the Tianhe District Document Department and estimates given in the meetings I had with them. This works alongside the personal resident stories I have collected to illustrate the tendencies without referring to them in quantitative categories.

For the PhD research I have not conducted any quantitative studies. The closest I got was perhaps during my last field trip in 2011, when I finally had a small hypothesis that made me do a quantitative check (the opposite process from the grounded theory approach, where a hypothesis is not the starting point), counting street vendors on a corner in the Central Business District before and during the Canton Fair (see 2.2.8 in Context chapter). When I found a way to use this material though, it was not as a standalone survey, but integrated in a story that includes observations from nearby backstreets and talks I had in Xian Cun. What I want to illustrate here is how one method is not independent but is informed by other means in my approaches.

Creswell (2007) categorizes the qualitative methods in five approaches; narrative research, phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case study. I draw insights from all five when generating my own methodology, but with emphasis on the narrative approach when addressing the migrants' voices, grounded theory when looking at the complexity of the urban ambience and ethnography when observing the patterns of relations in the urban village and between actors of the urban village and the city. I always use observation, and I find it interesting and important to bring the subject around the corner both physically and symbolically, as I attempt to enlighten a case with extensive use of context, and thus expand the presupposed 'case'. The various methods are used to feed the final representation of the data, and builds on Dadds' and Hart's (2001)

argument for a "methodological inventiveness" and Whitehead's (2009) explanation of a "living theory methodology" that goes beyond the fixed methodologies. I agree with Dadds and Hart when they state that,

> "what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of techniques." (Dadds and Hart 2001, p. 169)

The material I collect and handle in this research is to a large extent migrants' personal impressions and perceptions on spatial relations and observations of moments in time. As evidence of the movements in an era, it is limited. The material catches a glimpse of a much bigger reality, but they represent selected tendencies and are used in abstractions that take the individual stories into a representation of the plural voices. My research illustrates and abstracts a small portion of relations within a complex urban fabric. Not aiming to distract the findings to one simple valid abstraction, but rather to point to the ambiguous positionings that people take in relation to the urban sphere.

4.1.1 DISCOURCE ANALYSIS VS NARRATIVE APPROACH

The previous section is a reflection about methods used from a retrospective view. When I was first faced with an expectation to settle on a methodological approach I considered working my way through a discourse analysis inspired by Gillian Rose ('*Visual Methodologies*') and Foucault ('*Archeology of Knowledge*'). This was due to the idea I had of conceptualizing the planned *Photo Documentation Project* and also a wish to include my fascination for the artistic expressions of current Chinese artists challenging the picture of Chinese society. Cao Fei and her picture 'A Mirage'[2], is one example that I found applicable to illustrate the situation and found relevant in such a discursive contextualization. The image is a staged image of two characters in a field in Tianhe area during the urban development. It uses a language derived from Japanese Manga to question the subjective relation to change. With a background in architecture and a focus on visual production and interpretation, I thought a discourse analysis would be an analytical approach where I could contribute and elaborate a way of working and thinking that I already found challenging, inspiring and familiar. At that time I had

---

2   'A Mirage' from 2004 by Cao Fei can be seen in the Context chapter. Figure 2.7

already established the collaboration with the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center. I rented the house and I had started to plan the *Photo Documentation Project* to collect the migrants' subjective stories. However, these initiatives all corresponded better with a narrative approach. Both discourse analysis and the narrative approach can be seen as a postmodernist reaction and a modernist critique, both dealing with context and subjective readings that challenge the grand narrative. A narrative approach can, however, give the process a broader practical and analytical freedom compared to a discourse analysis. Also a discourse analysis could contribute to reducing the studies of empowerment of migrants to just text and symbolism[3]. Within a narrative approach, research can be framed both as "being and using narratives", according to Gale and Sikes (2006). Deleuze and Guattari as well as Brickell and Datta write about working within a narrative approach, but also arguing for open forms in regard to methodology. In this respect, the methodology and theory that I build upon are closely related. In regard to the contributions for the *Photo Documentation Project*, the process of the project itself can be read as a narrative. The pictures presented by the participants are expressions of the narrative, but also the setting with the presentations of the pictures and the extended frame one gets from looking at several contributions from several or the same participant can be seen as both being and using narrative. In the process of the projects and in the process of the analysis, new narratives are both found and made through new readings and interpretations by the participants themselves and by me.

4.1.2 NARRATIVE VOICES

As the ambition to collect and focus on the migrants' own perceptions of urban relation became more and more clear throughout the process, I have in my work emphasized the collection of data and analysis of data from the *Photo Documentation Project, House Rent Project* and the interviews and observations in Xian Cun. I will go into more detail about these projects in the following chapter when discussing the outcome in relation to the presentation of Shigangxi Cun. In these projects, the method, process and results are closely interlinked with spatial conditions. The change in course of the projects was done in response to changes in policy by local authorities and as a response to wishes and demands by the participants relating to the transforming spatial context.

Through the projects that involved migrant narratives, both the participants and I have

---

3   I refer to discourse analysis or discourse studies, while what is called Critical Discourse Approach would lead to another discussion, as it puts more emphasis on the sociopolitical and historical dimensions, focusing on power relations enacted in language/expression. It could be used to analyze many of the aspects in the *Photo Documentation Project*, but I have chosen to use a narrative approach.

come to reflect upon the role of the narrator. They have experimented with different voices and taken on different characters in their photo stories, and through their various subjective interpretations of migrant lives in the city, the participants have shown a very broad and diverse picture with various degrees of staging and ambiguity in the voice. Some have a clear agenda, pointing to certain aspects with their pictures like working conditions or housing conditions, while others document more randomly, and end up with a mix of pictures that look like typical tourist images with posing in front of monuments or in their own kitchen. Since the material collected is not meant for one sole piece of analysis or presentation but is regarded as material that can be used in different ways through different channels and with different editing and curating, there is no clear answer to the question, who is the narrator? Is it the one taking the picture, or me using it to extract content that I can put into the text? Already we have allowed the Sun Yat Sen University in Guangzhou to use some of the pictures in an exhibition they made regarding migrant lives (regarding further use, see the *Cases* chapter).

The participants decide what pictures they want to include in the project files. I aimed to let the participating migrants be the narrator on their own premises, and when referring to the pictures, I usually refer both to the image itself and to the presentation where it was shown to the other participants to talk about the context that the person presented it in and what reflections it stimulated among the other participants. Still, through this thesis and this representation of the images, I am obviously also a voice in this narration as I subjectively draw on some of their perceptions and emphasize certain aspects that fit into a course, which often corresponds but without being the same as the participants had with their contribution. One obvious aspect of changing the narrative is that the participants present a whole series of pictures, but these pictures are often taken in different locations and depict very different aspects of life. When I use the pictures I sometimes use them alongside pictures from the same series, but sometimes I look for themes and similarities that make me combine pictures from many contributors or from the same person but from several of their subjective stories.

One aspect of the plural narrator voice is therefore explained (previous section) with the process after the picture is taken, while another aspect of the narrator's voice is the influence that creates the conditions for the subject to choose a certain perception in their personal and individual photo story, and the conditions we all have to perceive the images with certain predispositions. In her discussion on narrative voices and the doubleness in the first person perspective, as explained with the I-narrator who tells the story of the I-character, Erdinast-Vulcan (2008) draws on Derrida who says that "the

I that tells itself does not exist". She sees this statement up against Bakhtin who states that "we can not have the last word". Erdinast-Vulcan thus asks who is telling the story when the first person does not get the last word? What does this become? A dialogue? A discourse?

Erdinast-Vulcan (2008) argues that the subject can never become a given object for itself as it must always reach beyond itself as "yet-to-be". "I can make myself an object for myself. But in this act of self-objectification … I shall continue to be in the act of this self-objectification, and not in its product" (Erdinast-Vulcan 2008, p. 5). She further builds on Galen Strawson and his text '*Against Narrativity'* (2005) when talking about the two modes of narrative identity through the distinction between the psychological narrativity thesis and ethical narrativity thesis. The psychological narrativity thesis is understood as a straightforward empirical, descriptive thesis about the way ordinary human beings actually experience their lives. While the ethical narrativity thesis states that experiencing or conceiving one's life as a narrative is a good thing, Erdinast-Vulcan questions whether the thesis of narrative identity liberates or imprisons human subjectivity. She further questions if individual agency is enabled or suppressed by a narrative conception of subjectivity before concluding that through the ethical narrative approach one can find an ethical freedom for the ethical subject through the gap between "is" and "ought". We are ethical beings because we will always reach out of our fabricated frames and act out of character. The ethical subject is; "present to itself as a task, the task of actualizing himself as a value, and is in principle incapable of being given, of being present-on-hand, of being contemplated: it is I-for-myself" (Erdinast-Vulcan 2008, p. 10).

4.1.3 LANGUAGE

The local language in Guangzhou is Cantonese, but most people can also speak Mandarin. Among the migrant residents in Guangdong province many cannot speak Cantonese (Pun Ngai 2004). Many bring with them local languages different from both Cantonese and Mandarin and when interviewed in Mandarin they have to stop and think to find the right word, or have to use long descriptions to capture the intended meaning. Many young people have studied English at School, but few have had any chance to practice it, so they might know a few words, but having conversations is difficult.

4.1.4 TRANSLATORS

I know only a few words of Mandarin, and only one word in Cantonese, so I am always dependent on translators when I have to interview people or talk my way around to find out what is happening. I have used translators to find old maps, to look into old district

archives, to translate letters addressed to the authorities from the locals of Xian Cun and to understand the blog of Jiajun. I have mostly collaborated with architecture students for my talks in Xian Cun and visits to archives. They come from the Architecture Department of South China University of Science and Technology, and one of the students, Xian Peining, organized all the sessions. She would contact the translating assistants among her fellow students and arrange the time and place for us to meet. I initially also used students for the follow-up of the *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project,* but after a while I found it better to engage a paid assistant to follow-up with the long-term projects and to translate and communicate between me and the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center[4]. While the architecture students have all been fluent in English, most of them complained that their English was not good enough, but in most cases they had a good vocabulary and our collaboration worked fine. For the last two years I have not used architecture students, but worked with two different translators, Chen Jie Lin for Shigang and relations with the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center and Mrs Chen Jianer for my returning visits to Nanting Cun, Xiao Zhou Cun and Shipai Cun. For the sensitive talks with local villagers and translation of their documentation on the demolition in Xian Cun, I have used an anonymous translator.

All the assistants have contributed with valuable communication skills as they bring their knowledge of local dialects or languages from other parts of China, as well as communicating curiosity and sincere interest in the people they talk to. Since the accuracy is potentially still at times lost in translation, as neither the migrants interviewed nor the translators I have used know all the right words in Mandarin or English, I have chosen not to use quotes when I refer to the talks I have had with migrants, but rather to describe an understanding of the interviewees' statements, often with a description of the context where it has been said, also referring to the observations I made directly during the talk.

I would usually meet the assistant by the nearby metro station and while walking to the village I would explain the purpose of the talks of the day. In addition to helping with translations in the interviews, the translators would also comment on situations they saw along the way, as they perceived and saw the cultural and historical meanings from the surroundings. One example of this is how the architecture student Chan Yiran who joined me for the first interview with the self-employed bicycle guard in Xian Cun told me of the meaning and history of the house where the bicycle shed was located. She told me it used to be the old Confucius school in the village, and she told of similar schools she

---

4   They did a very good job for me, but I felt uneasy as it was so time-consuming and they were all very dedicated and busy students.

had seen in other urban villages. The interviewee did not know of the story of the house she rented, but she knew that the same local villager had around a dozen locations to rent out to bicycle sheds inside the village, and when we went around looking at them we saw how most of them were former public buildings. Together the interviewee and the translator actively complemented each other with their contributions to highlight the situation; I see them both as informants as they carry different levels of local knowledge and experience.

4.1.5 THE INTERVIEWS

I have included a whole interview note in the beginning of the *Cases* chapter. It can be read as an example of how the interviews and talks were conducted. When I do interviews I usually prepare a list of questions I want to ask and topics I want to cover, but I also allow the situation and the person I interview to lead or influence the flow. The form of interview can thus be regarded as semi-structured. I do not record the interviews, and I only ask if I can take a picture of the people I interview after I have finished the interview. Many people do not want a picture to be taken, and some people even ask me to forget about how they look, and I politely say I will. Some of the people interviewed have a big impact with their personal story on me and on the translating assistants. Sometimes I have cried, and sometimes the assistant has cried and sometimes the interviewee has cried, or we have all laughed together.

The stories I collect are all related to location in the sense that I look for people to interview who use the urban village in different ways. I sometimes look for people who walk past, sometimes I look for people who work in the urban village, or people who reside in the urban village. I approach strangers that just happen to be in a certain location or occupied with a certain task. I try to avoid people who look too busy, but I often interview people at work, and simply step aside when they get an assignment or task they have to perform. A couple of old people have said their hearing is too weak to communicate and once the translator and I visited an authority office in front of the demolition in Xian Cun and they politely said the whole case was too sensitive for them to dare to answer any questions, even when I said we could focus on things with no sensitivity involved. Many are reluctant to talk if they think I will address politically sensitive issues. They might not reply at all and simply wave their hand to signal they are not interested. That happened several times when we addressed migrants in Xian Cun during the demolition for instance. Otherwise we are usually not rejected. Some people may answer our questions because they can then ask us questions to ease their own curiosity regarding why a foreigner is interested in them.

We usually start by explaining why I want to talk to them. I tell them I have followed the urban villages for several years and that I am interested in the subjective stories of how people live in and relate to the urban villages. Only once has anyone questioned my interest and my profession, and that was by some of the local villagers in Xian Cun in 2011. They believed I was a journalist working in camouflage as a researcher, and simply laughed when my assistant said I was an architect and doing research. Only after a long discussion that involved several local villagers, and where the talk revealed that I had followed the village since 2008, did they believe me. Before I left they said that never had a journalist spent that long listening to the locals in Xian Cun.

4.1.6 THE QUESTIONS

I try to keep a double agenda with all my interviews, both asking questions with a certain focus, but also allowing for the broader picture to emerge. That is why when I interviewed the woman who worked as a bicycle guard behind the food market in Xian Cun I got the story of how the plaza was run with information on user rights and the service of her bicycle storage, but to me of equal importance was her contribution telling how she went about getting her daily scheme with double work selling vegetables and guarding bikes to function along with her duties as a mother of two school children who had to go far to get to a school for migrants and how she did this with a drunken, gambling husband at home. I got to talk to her sons and I got to see her clients, and even got to talk to the local man from whom she rented the apartment where she lived. In this way I can build connections between singular stories to understand the broader picture. The different parts add up to a more nuanced and valid contribution. This story can also be linked to the other bicycle guard story I have accounted for in the *Cases* chapter, representing the stories of the long-term resident, self-employed migrants working in Xian Cun. She had lived in the village for a decade and I got to hear of her connection to her hometown, to the other migrants in the village and to the local villagers. She was one of the very few migrants I met who associated more with the local villagers than with other migrants.

I usually call these interviews 'talks' or 'personal stories'. I try to make the contributors talk, more than I try to lead the conversation with questions. The talks are therefore quite long, and I do get back to the questions I initially want to ask the interviewee, but in this later phase when I already know so much more about the person or the case, the questions can be phrased according to their story and not as general questions. When I make notes from the interviews I include questions, answers, perceptions of site, behavior and mood, and I regard all these aspects as equally important. With the

bicycle guard's story, I can use part of it to highlight the situation of migrant women in urban villages, while I can use another part of her story to highlight the situation for self-employed migrants and yet another part to talk of the rental system in the village.

QUESTIONS I NEVER ASKED:

Where do you sleep
Next to whom do you sleep
Next to what do you sleep
Under what do you sleep
What is your cover
What is your bedding
Where/how do you cook
Where/how do you eat
Where/how do you store your things
Where/how did you sleep last night
Where/how will you sleep tomorrow
How do you get around in the city
Where is you area of damain/area of reach
Where/how do you meet with friends
What buildings have you been to in the city
What homes have you been to in the city
Where do you feel safe
Where do you feel at home
What is convenince for you

Where is your limit
How do you manage
(How) do you keep in contact with your family / hometown
(How) do you keep in contact with friends in the city
Do you have a mobile phone
Do you have access to electricity
Where do you find water
Do you have a radio
Do you read newspapers
Do you watch TV-how/where/when
What is your favorite show
Do you have a profession
What profession did you perform in your hometown village
Did you bring a tool to the city
How do you get information to adjust like you do to the city

4.1 Questions I never asked. This is a sheet from my preparations to the fieldwork in 2008, intended to address migrants living on the street. I never used it. When I saw it again it seemed intrusive and I think it raises the question of where the border of dignity goes for the questions I ask.

155
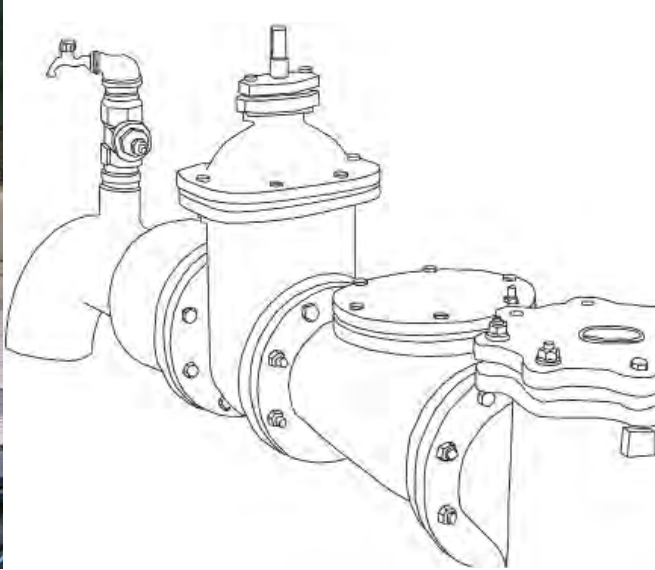
4.2   Where do you find water? Author's illustration and photographs 2006, 2008

Sometimes the questions I want to ask can seem sensitive or inappropriate. I sometimes have to ask the translator if my next question is taboo, and I let them decide how to approach the question, to ask it in an appropriate and respectful way. Especially for the two assistants I have used during the two last years ,this has been a very smooth process as they are very good at introducing my interest and letting the interviewee understand why it is interesting for me to know the situation from their point of view. I tell the translator to rephrase or reshape the question until it seems OK. For instance, I once asked my assistant if she could find out why a person could continue to keep her shop in the main street of Xian Cun when all the other houses in the street were evicted and the only form of sale we could otherwise see was small informal street vendors selling their goods in front of the former shops. She then started with another question, bought some sweets and found out the family running the shop came from the same area as her own grandmother, and from then on they talked the local language. Then the interview started, and not until the end of the interview did I get the answer to the initial question. Along the way though, I got a lot of information on the broader picture, and can include yet another story of a migrant coping in the city in my documentation. She introduced me to the new challenges in the school situation for both the local villagers and the migrant children during the demolition period for instance, as the school and the kindergarten were among the first buildings to be torn down during the demolition process in 2010.

Before the fieldwork in 2011, I prepared a lot of questions for Jiajun and a questionnaire for the other participants of the *House Rent Project* related to home and belonging. One night I saw the Chinese documentary '*Last train home*' by Lixin Fan (2009) concerning the complex and difficult choices people face in relation to migration. After that I went over to the computer and looked at the questionnaire I had made for the participants of the *House Rent Project* and told myself it was far too intrusive. Unintended, I have several times come across personal stories that I do not need to trample over for the sake of this

research, and I pictured all the answers standing behind the simple questions for this questionnaire of where you moved, when and why guiding each step? It felt very wrong to put these simple yet fundamental questions in a scheme like that, when thinking of lost homes and fragmented families. In the interviews I did with Jiajun later I asked her if it was OK to get back to the question of home and belonging, several times, as she evaded it every time. She was very emotional about this subject, and said it was difficult for her to talk about it, but it was easier for her to write about it, and so she did. She had addressed the subject in her blog on several occasions. She said she needed to reflect on it and wanted to talk about it as she felt it was important for migrant perceptions, but she expressed how it is not easy to talk of something as fundamental as home, when you feel you have none[5].

---

5   For Jiajun's story look at the *Introduction* chapter and the *Discussion* chapter.

CASES IN PLACES. SITUATED INCIDENTS AND PROJECTS ON SITE.

5.0.1   INTRODUCTION

In my research I have focused on migrants' situatedness and agency in relation to the core city-urban villages, with special attention on Xian Cun in Guangzhou. In this chapter I address the relations displayed and expressed in regard to some concrete places within and beyond the village. I do not only follow the migrants' views but try to include the local villagers and their perception and relation to change, as all stakeholders take part in shaping the transformation of the urban ambience through their agency. I have also included a brief presentation of incidents and talks from other villages where I have collected stories that exemplify matters I have not observed or documented in Xian Cun. This is to broaden the picture and to include parameters which apply to peri-urban/suburban villages, and to show a different course of transformation over time than that found in Xian Cun.

Throughout the other chapters I have used examples from my findings in the urban villages that would otherwise have been placed in this chapter. The text as a whole should be considered as a reading of my case and not just this chapter alone. The account seen in the text is not a total account of incidents I have observed and documented but examples that through their subjective approach can be read as metaphors and examples of specific developments and relations that are found in multiple forms in the urban villages and beyond. The complete list of talks conducted is presented in the appendix.

In this chapter I organize the talks, observations and projects in relation to place, although they could also be informing each other in different arrangements. I have done this to enable the reader to keep track, as I mention many small observations and incidents that might seem insignificant, but that I find relevant and interesting and will use as a backdrop in the discussions in the final chapter.

I start with the core city villages with emphasis on the observations made and talks I had in Xian Cun. Afterwards I will briefly present the results from visits in the urban villages of Liede, Shipai and Tangxia. I will then briefly present cases from the rural but gentrified Xiaozhou Cun area, the suburban villages Nanting Cun and Beiting Cun and look at the migrant neighborhoods in the central district of Liwan, which is not an urban village but a neighborhood hosting many migrant residents. The chapter ends with an account of Shigangxi Cun and the two adjoining projects; *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, with emphasis on the latter.

5.1 XIAN CUN

5.1.1 INTERVIEW NOTE

Talk with Mrs Wang; a self-employed bicycle guard, Xian Cun 2008-11-21, 15:30

Translator and research assistant: Chan Yiran

Monday this week I walked down the main road in Xian Cun and counted four bicycle sheds full of old bikes in the middle of the day. They all had a wall made of bricks with a gate in the middle. The walls were enlarged with net, and the roof was made of corrugated steel. Today we set off to talk to the people running these places.

We approached the ones in the first parking area, and outside there was a sign saying they were open 24 hours a day, also there was a sign saying they sold bicycles, and another sign saying they bought bicycles and different electronic equipment such as air conditioners, rice cookers and so on (listed on poster). Inside a group of people, all men except one woman, were busy playing cards. We asked who ran the place and if we could talk to the person. The woman said she ran the place, but she did not have time to talk to us. The next place was exactly the same; they played cards and they did not have time to talk to us although this time a man was running the place.

In the third place we decided to not ask if we could talk, but instead started by asking a question. When we got there Chan Yiran read the signs carved in the stone over the door indicating that this used to be some sort of traditional Confucian school a long time ago. The remaining part of the old wall also looked very solid, with a stone gate and bricks in typical blackish/grey color. Outside they had a small sign announcing they guarded bikes and their clothes were hanging to dry under the roof. We entered the house and there was no crowd and no one playing cards. A woman was watching television (an old film) and a man was sitting quietly on a bench next to her. The woman answered our questions, smiled and after some more questions she asked us to sit down in her 'office'.

The first question we asked her was if she had many regular customers, and how the deal was arranged. She told us she had about 100 customers, mostly migrants from the neighboring area who would park their bicycles there. Most of them paid in advance for a month at the time. This was priced at 25 CNY. There was also the option to park for one day (12 hours) for 1 CNY. Since this place was open 24 hours and she had no employees, we asked if there were quiet nights and she responded that most of the customers used their bikes every day for work, so they came and collected and delivered bikes all day and all night long. Some of them delivered newspapers and got up and collected their bikes

at around 02:00 in the morning. Some would come home late because they work in the restaurant business; there was never a quiet night.

She and her husband rented the place from a local man, who in turn rented it from the local village government. The village government owed ten such places in the village, and they were all rented out to locals. She said it was not possible for a migrant to rent a place like this directly from the village government. She and her husband had moved to Xian Cun three years ago, and started this business. Now they had two parking houses, located almost next to each other.

They lived in the parking house; they slept on one mezzanine, while they had another mezzanine on the other side of the room for storage. They also had a kitchen. There was no toilet or shower in this building or shelter. There was, however, a toilet in the other parking house nearby. The wind blew directly through the house as the upper part of the walls was made of netting. Mrs Wang said it was too cold in the winter and too warm in the summer because the corrugated steel roof collected heat. The mezzanine did not have walls, but some insulating thick, dark curtains hanging from the ceiling.

She came from Luo Ding City in Guangdong Province and she was 39 years old. She was married. I asked her if she had a baby as I saw a pushchair next to her office in the house, but she said it was parked here for a charge just like the bikes, but yes she did have two children, who were already grown-up.

She had moved from her hometown to Guangzhou in 1991. She used to work in a factory and she had also worked in a restaurant and in a biscuit shop. When they started this business in Xian Cun it was the first time they were self-employed. I asked if it was difficult, but she said no, the work was simple, but they never had time off. They had to look after the two places for 24 hours, and they had no one to help out, so it was a full-time job for both of them. Sometimes her husband could look after both places. They had surveillance and recorded two films showing who went in and out of the building all the time and therefore she could leave for short periods for shopping or other errands. I asked her what she liked to do outside the village, and she said she liked to and sometimes did walk to Teem Mall and Grandview, the two big shopping centers in the main axis of Tianhe. She went there to buy some things in the supermarket as well as to look around and browse.

I asked about the work, how it was organized and what she had to do. If she had to record

everyone going in or out or being awake at night to lock people in and out. She said they were always one person sleeping downstairs (pointing to the corner of the office) to guard at night, but they did not need to stay awake. The camera was on, and the door was closed, but not locked, so people would open the door themselves and take the bike and leave without disturbing her or her husband. If a bicycle was stolen inside the house she was responsible for this, and she would have to pay for the bike, but this had never happened. Bikes were stolen from other places though, and a desperate owner had tried to say that the bike was stolen while in her guard. She said she had always managed to prove that they were wrong by showing the video tapes.

5.1   Mrs Wang's bicycle shed and home. Author's photograph stitch, 2008.

I asked her if she ever wanted to go back to her hometown, and she said, yes, she did want to move back some day, since life in the city gave her no spare time and because she had so little money and everything was so expensive here. She imagined she could manage to live better in her hometown with her savings. For her, Xian Cun was a place to work, not a place to grow old.

I asked if I could take a picture of her, and she said yes, straightened up and looked very seriously into the camera. She also asked if we could take one picture together, and wanted me to send her a copy of the pictures. I said yes of course and asked her to write down her address.

After we left her place we walked further down the main road, and just three houses along was the next bicycle house that turns out to be the other place they run. While we were standing outside she arrived to go to the toilet, and we joined her to look at this place too, with a small room that can be locked to the right of the main entrance and when we visited there was a man about to bring out books from the room. He had

already taken out a big table and then he lined all the books up on the table. We asked if it is a bookshop inside their bicycle shed and they said no, this is a book renter. The man who runs this business rents the place from the migrant couple. He also has another job during the day, but in the evenings he operates this book renting shop.

Second interview and stroll around the village with Mrs Wang, Xian Cun, 2008-11-27.
Translator and research assistant: Lin Ying Hao

We went to Mrs Wang's place. She was not there, but we tried to talk to her husband and give him the photos. He did not look at us and seemed very uninterested. He was watching television. She stuck her head out from the curtains on the mezzanine. I think she must have been sleeping. She put on a suit jacket, but after we had asked her a few questions and she had asked us if we wanted to go to the temple with her, she went and redressed and washed her face and put on some makeup. She was really happy with the photos.

She said that the local man they rented the two bicycle sheds from was the same man, who was responsible for all the ten bicycle places in the village. They paid 4500 CNY in rent to him every month, while he just had to pay 2000 CNY in rent every month to the local village, thus he had a good income when you start adding up for all the ten places.

They earned about 6000 CNY on their business every month. With 4500 for the rent and 500 CNY in expenses (electricity, gas, water), this gave a net income that only allowed them to live a very basic life. They earned a little extra by renting some space to the book renter and also a waste-collector was allowed to store her plastic in their shed at night for a small charge. Mrs Wang said they could afford less and less lately even though they had the same number of clients as before because the price of food had gone up drastically [2008]. Rice, oil and meat had all become much more expensive.

It was not a rule that every bicycle should park in a parking house, but most people felt it was more secure, and did not risk parking their bikes on the street. Paying 25 CNY a month to keep their bike safe and secure was cheaper than buying a new bike if stolen. Some of the bicycle sheds did sell old bikes for an average price of 250 CNY she told us, but she seldom did. She only sold bikes if some clients neglected to collect their bike, but that rarely happened. They did not have a repair service, but they would fix a puncture for one of their clients if asked and paid.

Her son and daughter both lived in their hometown. They were both in their twenties

164

and they used to come and visit their parents in Guangzhou. The parents seldom went home to their hometown as they had to take care of their business.

After I had asked some questions she asked me why I was so interested in her life, and if I also asked the other bicycle shops the same questions. I told her I was interested in finding out how this village functioned and how people related to each other and how migrants and locals lived their lives (I had told her the same thing the first time). She asked me if I was interested in the temples, and I said yes and she said she could join me in visiting them.

She took us to the Lu temple. It is the temple closest to her house, and also it is the one you come to when following the southern main street towards the west. To get there we passed the park by the pond, and she stopped and said it was a beautiful place and that she wanted us to take a photo. At the temple we went in, and there were some local women playing mahjong. She talked to them and smiled, and the ladies asked us to sit down. They all acted very friendly both towards us and Mrs Wang. She said she could not play the game. Lin Ying Hao, the translator, told me they use different rules from place to place, so it was not necessarily the case that you could play the game if you came to a new place. He could not play mahjong either.

Then Mrs Wang took us to the Xian temple, which is situated north west in the village. In front there is a small triangular plaza and she said it was often used to perform ceremonies and arrangements by the local inhabitants. Inside the temple we met with a girl and her father. He was the caretaker of the temple. He knew a lot about the history, and had long answers to all our questions. It was impossible for Lin to translate as the man did not pause, he just talked and talked, but Lin told me the stories afterwards. The man also suggested that we try to look up relatives or friends of a certain man that was already dead, who had been collecting old maps and photographs from the village. He knew nothing about the stones with the inscribed story that the old ladies had mentioned [2008-11-27; talk with two old ladies]. He told the story how the Xian village had got its name: a murderer who hid with a family from the first emperor and his men. Somebody found out and the family had to flee and ended up in Guangdong where they changed name and settled. He said people from the same family (Xian) also lived in Yuan village, Shipai village, both in Guangzhou and in Guangxi autonomous region and Hainan Province.

He said in the old times the population from all the villages in the area had a lot of

contact with each other, and the residents of Xian Cun would particularly visit Liede since it was located in the vicinity of Xian Cun.

We asked him about demolishing the village, and he said that to him it was always wrong to demolish a house that had been built; so much of the memory and knowledge of the old times were hidden in the buildings. He said there used to be several temples in Xian Cun, but now there were only five left[1] [2].

We continued our trip and Mrs Wang took us to the main square of the village with the service center for the elderly before going over to the temple close to the village government. There she commented how the park looked so nice, and she wanted us to take more photos. She asked us to give her a copy of the photos, and we said we would. She went and knocked on a door and said a friend of hers who had come from Liede lived there, but nobody was home. Then we walked past the village government, and she said she only went there when she had to, only when it was related to business and staying in the village. She said the village used to be larger and the road more narrow towards the north, and that the demolition of this area happened around 2000. Then we went to the market, and she said it was part of the 'Liede Bridge Project', and that it was meant to be a temporary market. The buildings next to the market, which I had believed to be a disused factory, used to be a market before, but this activity was moved down to the new market in the south of the village because they needed to demolish this plot in order to build the wide road leading to the bridge. She thought that the new market was built in 2005. She said she used to work in an ironmonger's located on the other side of the road from the old market, but it was closed down when they tore down the houses on that side and replaced it with a fence. This was the time when she and her husband started the bicycle storage business and moved their home and business into the village.

Then we went along the fruit, vegetable and meat sellers. This was not the food market but people selling vegetables in the street near the former food market, an informal market that had sprung from the former activity but continued after the formal market was moved[3]. On the way back to her street we met with the man from Liede. He believed about 1,000 people from Liede had moved to Xian Cun after the demolition. He was a local villager who used to rent out apartments as a living, but he was unemployed here

---

1   He was the first person we talked to who expressed sadness for the forthcoming demolition. All others, both local villagers and migrant residents, said if the compensation was right they believed it was for the best. This was also what we heard from the older people we talked to during the visit in 2008.
2   A separate talk note was made on the talk with the caretaker on the temple.
3   See map of market locations later in this chapter (5.1.5 New Informal food market).

and now rented a flat for his own accommodation in Xian Cun. He lived from the money the government had paid him in compensation for his houses in Liede.

Then we came to her second shop, and we went in with her. I saw the book renter was not there. He only worked as a book renter during the nights, which was also the time when most customers were free and would come and look for books. I asked her if the shed in the corner where he stored his books was built by them or if it was there before the book renter business started, and she said it had been there since they started to rent this place. She stayed and we left to go to the park to talk with the young mother and the old ladies, and when we talked to the old ladies she came again. This time she had combed her hair and smiled and looked like she wanted us to take even more pictures.

5.2   The book renter in Mrs Wang's shed. Author's photograph, 2008, 2009

5.1.2   THE BICYCLE GUARD TALK PUT IN CONTEXT

As an introduction to this chapter I wanted to present this interview note in its full length. It addresses many aspects of migrant positioning. It shows how a life is organized around a workplace and how a migrant can come to relate to a place like Xian Cun.

Mrs Wang's story is not meant as a typical migrant story, but as one example of subjective positioning within the village by an individual belonging to a heterogeneous group. Mrs Wang lived in a bicycle shed and not in an apartment as most of the residents in the village did and she has also lived much longer in the village than the average of six months. She was a self-employed migrant, living and working in the village in a joint work/living space, while most residents in the village worked in the surrounding CBD.

Residents finding this kind of life/work option are often not the newcomers but the ones with more experience and connections in the village. They tend to be more settled in the village, and often live with their spouse or entire family in the village. I talked to several other self-employed migrants staying for a prolonged time in the village; for instance an old couple running a shared shop as a seamstress and a hairdresser[4], a young couple running a potable water barrel shop[5] and another young couple with child running a grocery store in the old main street[6]. Although some of them saw their future back in their hometown while others believed they would stay in the city, none of them believed an extended stay in Xian Cun would be likely. They attach to an urban form that has a sentence that will sooner or later be reshaped or removed, and this is reflected in most of the interviewees' responses on a future life in the city and on future bonds with the urban village.

Mrs Wang's story represents how the migrant population in the village is affected by its organization and transformation. It shows how she copes with transformation and how she relates to difficulty, repeatedly having to reconsider her presence in the village and her way of living. Her answers and her guided tour in the village reflect her relation to the village, to the local villagers, to the migrant residents and to the surrounding city. She showed us the beauty of the village while also pointing to the changes in physical form that caused her and others to reorient.

This story can also be read in relation to the *Methodology* chapter, as it shows how the interviews are conducted and how I refer to them in my notes and what aspects of surroundings I connect to the talks. Due to the fact that I visited Xian Cun almost daily for two months I could return and continue the talks with people to ask more questions if I had heard something interesting from others that I wanted to throw light on with comments from former interviewees.

In Mrs Wang's case I was curious to hear more about the economy in her business once I found out they were renting out a small part of the bicycle shed to the book renter and this book renter's business also became interesting as it communicates the special situation arising in a migrant neighborhood where the residents are not allowed to borrow books in the city library and do not have the funds to buy books. Furthermore, it can broaden the picture of diverse stories when seen in relation to the talk with the

---

4   2008-12-05 Talk with seamstress and hairdresser. Old migrant couple
5   2008-12-19 Talk with couple running water bottle shop
6   2011-10-16 Talk with shop owner in old main street

woman in charge of the day-based bicycle storage, outside the market for instance[7]. While she was responsible for the bikes of drop-by clients on behalf of the official village-run market and was assigned a fixed salary, at the same time she sold vegetables on her own from the bicycle guard stall. She is another representative of a migrant finding space for extra elements within the confined space of a given task. Since the bicycle shed of Mrs Wang was used as a home, a book renter shop and a plastic collector's base, space-wise both these cases show how they efficiently find opportunity and room in a very limited situation. It is another form of time and space sharing of interests[8], performed by individuals with soft power and minimum force. These examples, however, are not performed in the public domain but inside their confined workspace.

In a broad sense all the talks are interlinked in talking of the 'everyday urbanism' of the village, but in a more narrow sense Mrs Wang's conversation can be linked to other specific consultations to enlighten certain aspects, like the talks I had with a mechanic who appeared to be a customer of the book renter[9]. He lived in a shared apartment inside the village. He told us how the television was always on in their shop, and when he came home and wanted to rest in the room he shared with five other men, he found the best way was to read a book in bed, so he would regularly visit the book renter's shops in the village. There were several. Some shops were only renting out books while others were both selling and renting books[10]. Zhu Bin worked in a bicycle repair shop handling tires and frames. Their main income came, however, from selling bicycle locks. The workshop was located along Jin Sui Lu, the south end road of Xian Cun, and their clients were not so much the residents of the village but more often the students heading to and from the universities further east in Tianhe. From this one could further discuss how to deal with privacy and protect a place of one's own when living in a shared and open environment. Not using Mrs Wang or Zhu Bin`s case but rather informants from the *Photo Documentation Project*, I will come back to this at the end of this chapter. I could also use their example on how enterprises direct their business both inward and outward from the village, and how they utilize the scarce resources of the low income migrants and student savings to earn their wages. Later in the Xian Cun section of this chapter I will describe more about how the fringe areas of the village operated very differently from the central areas of the village by both migrants and local villagers.

---

7   2008-11-28 Talk with vegetable seller and employed bicycle guard
8   As accounted for in the *Theory* chapter.
9   2008-11-25 Interview with mechanic Zhu Bin
10   2008-12-05 Talk with book seller/book renter

The different conversations display how several enterprises perform related tasks, but still position themselves differently in relation to their clients. They all operate within a narrow latitude, having clients with scarce incomes that requires them to balance between the cautiousness of not losing their belongings (their bike) and saving costs on a regular day-to-day basis. Spending slightly more than 2% of an average monthly migrant salary of 800 CNY on a protected parking space for their bike may not seem that much, but for this salary there is very little to spare in the first place, so 25 CNY a month is a substantial sum, not to mention that it is 10% of what their bike is worth, as buying an old bike would cost them about 250 CNY. If they believed the bike would not be stolen on the streets of the village most of the clients would rather follow the students and buy a lock.

During our walk we were impressed by Mrs Wang's interest in, and knowledge of, the transformation of the village. Most of the facts about the village that she explained during our walk were later verified by the local village administration. The story of the curving in front of the bicycle shed that I will come back to later in this chapter can also be seen as interlinked. A shoe sole seller lived on the other side of the curve and in relation to her story I will account for how this public space was and is still used[11].

One of my main challenges in this writing process has been how to account for the informants' contributions and in what way to intertwine the story of the plural voices. I want the text to reflect this story of village relations told in ambiguity by the many stakeholders, and I also want the text to reflect how both relations and places change over time as that was so evident in my returning visits.

In this text I have been forced to only refer to a small selection of the conversations I have had but for my own image of the mechanisms of the urban village they all play a part and I would like to include them all. They reveal tendencies that could and should be further analyzed to understand the transformation that is put in force during a demolition process like the one in Xian Cun. The book renter who I spoke to two years in a row for instance revealed how the book renting business had expanded after the village was destined to be demolished, as the patrols focusing on informal businesses were eased throughout 2009. It is one of several accounts of how informal business bloomed during these uncertain days.

---

11   2008-11-27 Talk with Xiao Zhou, sole seller and 2008-12-04 talk with two garbage collectors.

5.3   Seamstress and hairdresser. Author's photographs, 2008, 2009.

During my yearly visits to Xian Cun I always walked past the bicycle shed. The couple was still running the bicycle shed when I visited in 2009, and Mrs Wang said the future was uncertain. In 2010 they had left the village and all the bicycle sheds were emptied out and the roofs had been removed. This was part of the first phase of the demolition that addressed the properties managed by the village government. They eradicated almost all their buildings in the initial phase of the demolition, leaving the elderly center. I did not succeed in tracking down Mrs Wang in the village in 2010 or 2011. The old seamstress/hairdresser couple continued to run their business in 2010, with most of the other nearby shops closed down, but their shop was also gone when I visited in 2011. The shop owners in the main street continued their daily lives, sending their daughter to school every day and continued in the village with no exact plans for change for the future although the presence of a massive transformation/demolition was all around them as of October 2011. Their shop was one of the few still running.

The three different options of staying/leaving could perhaps be explained as simply as the coincidence of renting spaces with different owners answering differently to the demolition obligations: the bicycle shed, a property managed by the village administration

directly where the tenant had no say, was demolished on request of the village authority as an example of the start-up of the demolition; the second option shown with the seamstress/hairdresser shop owned by a villager who chose to sign the compensation agreement and therefore left the house on request; and the third course of action was seen in the grocery shop in the main road owned by a local villager who was refusing to sign the agreement. For the shopkeepers in the main road the future is still uncertain but they carry on as if nothing has happened while everything has happened all around them. Their business is as good as ever.

5.4a The grocery in the main street. Author's photograph, 2011.

The very last night I visited the village, in October 2011, the local villagers were organizing a banquet in reminiscence of the bicycle shed/old Confucian school. There were several hundred people gathered in the plots around the curving of the old main street. The local villagers had in a way taken back their village through the use of the vacant plots exemplified by the use of the Confucian school.

5.4b   Banquet in the former bicycle shed. With cortersy of Malte Lech, 2011.

5.1.3   XIAN CUN HISTORY

Tianhe District Document Department had produced historical records on most of the urban villages in the district. Two historians had spent three years researching the history of Xian Cun and were about to complete a book on the village to be released in the spring of 2009 when I visited them during my fieldwork in 2008. I got a copy of the digital file not yet printed, and have used this as one of my sources on the historical development of the village, along with Tianhe district's yearbooks from the '80s and '90s and Guangzhou yearbooks from the '60s and '70s.

According to the historical records collected by Tianhe District Document Department, Xian Cun was originally built during the Ming Dynasty. The Xian family came from the central parts of China to settle in Guangdong in 1131, and one can find its descendants not only in Xian Cun, but in several villages in Guangzhou and Panyu. Xian Cun is not a one clan village, but encompasses five main families, all still having their own ancestral temples within the village. Apart from the Xian family one finds the locals of the Luo family, the Liang family, the Lu family and the Pan family in Xian Cun. The Lu family came from Panyu in 1265 and the Pan family came at the end of Qing Dynasty from Panyu.

The water supply was improved in the 1960s with water pipes extending the previously used wells. The open sewage system, however, was not changed into a closed system until 1990, when the streets were paved with concrete. Most of the urban transformation in the village happened in and after 1990, as this was the year when the village got compensation for much of their farmland due to urban expansion in the area. The village invested their compensation in 13 factories this year, specializing in metal, plastic, pipes and drinks. According to the yearbooks of Tianhe, the total population of the village was 2,252 in 1990. The local farmers accounted for 2,140 persons, while there was a small share of 112 city residents living in the village. The village farmland was 366 Mu[12]. Apart from paddy and vegetable fields they had several fish ponds and sustained a big pig industry. In 1990 they had 29,401 pigs, equaling 41 pigs per family according to the year book.

The rapid population growth happened after 1990 when the migrant population entered, and resulted in a twenty-five-fold growth within the next 15 years. Starting out with 2,240 residents in 1990, this had increased to a registered total population of 51,868 inhabitants in 2005. The village layout was restricted to the new urban grid, and was

---

12   1 Mu = 1 Chinese Acre = 666,6667 m² according to : http://www.chinesetools.eu/tools/unit-converter/

allowed to expand with some housing areas south of the lake, but most of the increase was dealt with through extensions and newly enlarged houses on existing plots. The migrant workers accounted for 38,650 persons in 2005, while the local population had grown to 13,218 residents. The village had 1,788 houses, meaning the average was nearly 30 people per house.

The other facts one can read out of the yearbook in 2005 indicate a very different ambience than that of the small rural village of 1990. 3,000 illegal shops were registered, 1,600 illegal wall advertisements were reported, 39 illegal internet cafés were shut down and 502 criminal cases were reported. This all indicates that the area was in decline, but that is only part of the picture. Step by step the village turned from a rural to an urban environment. The big pig industry disappeared and so did the many fish ponds. Most of the people we interviewed who had been in the village for a longer period, both migrants and locals, expressed how they found its appearance had improved throughout the last two decades. The most important improvement was expressed to be the paving of the streets and the sanitation, as the village from then on was less dusty and cleaner, but also big construction projects like the new main shopping street of 2003 was mentioned as having an impact on the ambience of the village, helping it become a more integrated part of the city.

once

Guangzhou East Railway station 1990

2 240 inhabitants

Built; School, Nursery, Kindergarten, Elderly Center. All streets paved with concrete. Open sewage changed into closed system.

1990

5.5a Xian Cun development. Author's illustration.

**Citic Plaza
80 floors
1997**

**3920 illegal
shops.
73 shop buildings
thorn down.**

**33 890
inhabitants**

**980 tons rubbish
cleaned.
9 recycle stations
shut down.**

2003

**New main
pedestrian
shopping
street.**

**51 868
inhabitants**

**3000 illegal shops
2200 street vendors.**

2005

5.5b   Xian Cun development. Author's illustration.

2009

2010-

5.5c   Xian Cun development. Author's illustration.

From 2003 to 2005 Xian Cun saw even greater population growth, growing from 33,890 to 51,868 in two years, the migrant population accounting for most of the increase. After 2005 the population growth was minor as the capacity to host more residents was reached. The village could simply not absorb more residents in its limited space, as the policy got stricter in regards to fire protection and removal of illegal extensions. In spring 2009 there were also new regulations stating that for rented apartments one should calculate at least six square meters per person, while until then the limit had been one room with a minimum of three square meters, and bunk-beds of no more than two levels, according to the information boards on the wall of Xian Cun migrant registration office.

5.1.4   XIAN CUN UNDER PRESSURE

Situated in Tianhe district, Xian Cun is one of three villages located along the main axis of Zhujiang New Town. The two other villages, Liede in the south and Linhe Cun in the north next to the east railway station, have both been demolished already. The demolition of Xian Cun is not yet completed because not enough local residents have signed the agreements on the compensation. The demolition should thus legally never have started in the first place, and was stopped before completion by the provincial authorities according to my informants. For Xian Cun, the authorities' urge to demolish it is perhaps slightly relinquished after the unsuccessful attempts to complete the eradication process of Xian Cun before the Asian Games. Maybe the local authorities also hope that over time the local villagers' fighting spirit will wane. In December 2011 the local radio announced that a Xian Cun plot had been assigned to the Poly Real Estate Group, due to a raised compensation. As it stands now, half eradicated and with no maintenance or garbage handling in the village, the process is on halt but difficult to reverse. The demolition is intended to continue by the authorities, with concrete proposals for the new layout of the area.

While the local villagers initially only raised their voice to get better compensation they now address general corruption issues and have built up a stronger identity as Xian Cun residents focusing on heritage and pride as a people. They talk of how they also did not surrender to earlier pressure, and they talk of the long history of the village as a way to justify their situatedness, similar to that expressed in the Chrysanthemum festivals (Siu 1990) as described in the *Context* chapter on the Pearl River Delta. The local population is at present struggling for their existence as a community, as they can only put the strength behind their demands for a good and fair compensation. In this process it seems they have grown to appreciate the village in a different way from before.

Delegations from the local villagers have addressed the district authorities, the city authorities, the provincial authorities and even the national authorities, leaving for Beijing with a big delegation in 2010. According to my interviewees, two of the old men joining this trip to Beijing were retained in the capital and have still not returned. The district level authorities later said that they suspect the process to run more smoothly as the 'troublemakers' are not present according to local villagers I have talked to.

During my visit in 2011 the ancestral halls were all closed and the little park by the lake was in ruins. The central area of the village with the elderly center is still the heart of the village, as the only reminiscent of a public program. The kindergarten, school and hospital are all demolished, as is the food market. As mentioned in relation to the old Confucian school though, the local villagers now reoccupy the vacant plots in the other parts of the village with their new banquet program.

Also the migrant residents take part in reoccupying the village with a new layer of informal shops emerging in the street in front of the former shops and moving into the emptied houses.

5.1.5   NEW INFORMAL FOOD MARKET

In late September 2011, the plot of the former village school with its sports field plaza was converted to the new food market of the village. It was conveniently located near the former food market, visible and with direct access from the pavement of the city block, meaning one did not have to 'enter' the village streets to get access. This made the tradesmen gain clients from the nearby housing compounds of the surrounding city. The fruit-sellers I talked to [2011-10-16 Talk to fruit seller in temporary market] said they had left Xian Cun when the old food market was demolished and stayed in their hometown until the new market was opened. The new market was not a formal initiative. It was one seller from the former market just gathering a few other sellers to start a new market, and so far it did not involve payment for a stand. The fruit seller had paid 4000 CNY a month for their stall in the former formal food market, and as they did not have this expense in the new market, their income was now better than before. Even though the market had just existed for 20 days when I visited, they had already regained many of their former clients from the surrounding area and although there were still fewer clients than at the former market, since there were fewer competing sellers, each one had better conditions than before. The fruit-seller family I talked to used to live in Xian Cun but when they returned to the city this time they found it was better to live in Shipai and work in Xian Cun. They rented an apartment for 700 CNY a month, and when

I asked if that was expensive they said no, it was good value for money because it was a nice and spacious place. They did not want their child to be raised in all the dust and garbage of Xian Cun. While the former market was a new building from the 2000s with water and good sanitation, the new location was a smashed schoolyard with mounds of bricks and dust, and since the market sold meat and fish as well as fruit, this new initiative was a fairly unhygienic enterprise that smelled of the rotten juices from meat and fish that were blending into the dusty ground.

I was not able to trace the informal processes that had led to the schoolyard being occupied by a food market, or to reveal the means in which it was handled by the village authorities. It was obviously a visible activity that was noticed and the authorities must have discussed how to handle it, but after 20 days it was still operating, growing in size and significance. Incidents like this can be the start of something more permanent or it can be a flux. In the food market case all food stalls were moveable, and since the demolition of the school had been halted, it was occupying a place otherwise not in use. The market and its offshoot had been 'temporarily settling' in various places near the former markets before, and this activity had also previously been allowed to persist. The new market was not seen as fixed to the site. It was obviously only temporarily occupying the place, and therefore perhaps the authorities allowed it to continue as long as the site was not intended for something else. In this case it is an example of the potential ambiguous character of the urban land in transformation. While there are formal and planned directions of development, there is also acceptance for temporary, unplanned ambiguous uses of land. This provides latitude to migrants who otherwise in more ordered periods have less influence over the use of land, and at the same time this practice can contribute to creating a livable village in the midst of a demolition process as it addresses the needs and convenience of the population.

5.6 Food stalls and food market. Author's illustration and photographs, 2008, 2011.
1: Old food market, 2: Informal food stalls, 3: New food market built 2005, demolished 2010, 4: Recent informal food market in scool yard.
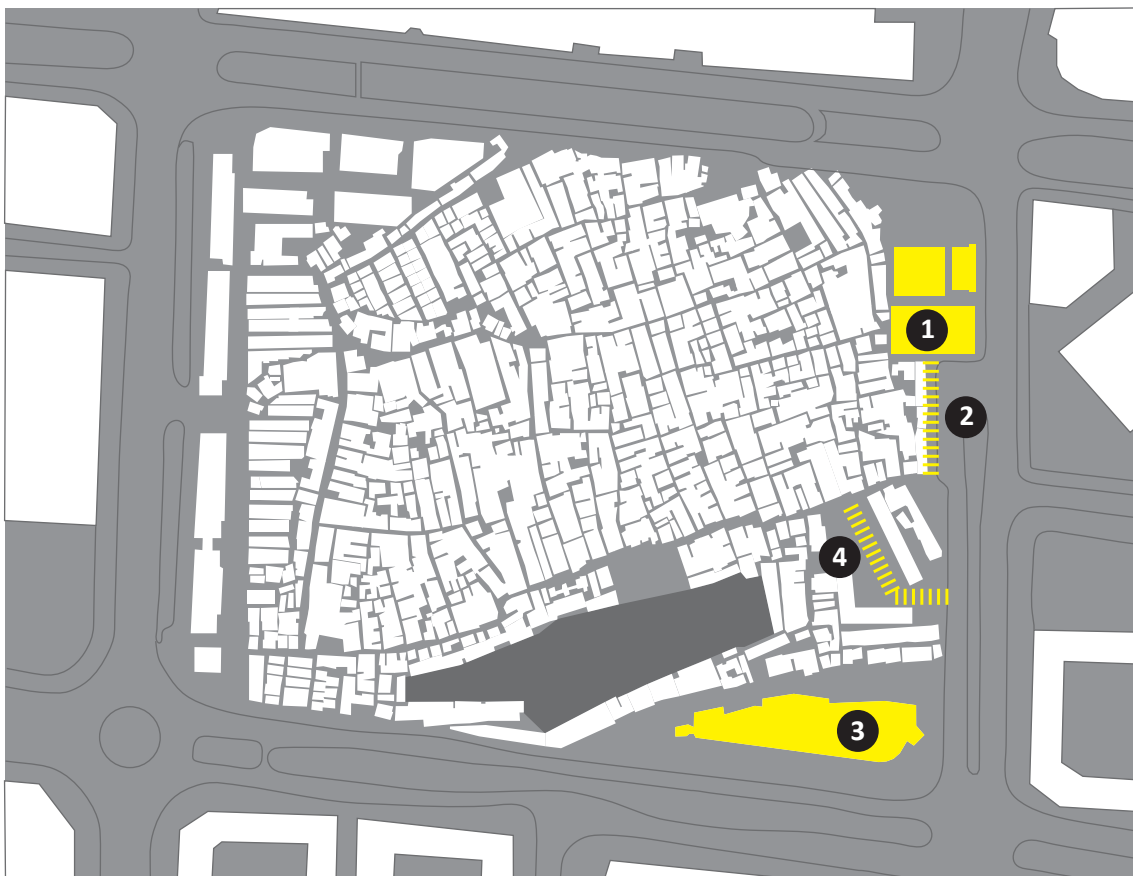
5.7   Fenced village. Author's photographs, 2010, 2011.

5.1.6 FENCED VILLAGE

Before the Asian Games the village had fences erected with big commercial posters on scaffolding to hide the village from the adjacent city. The number of surveillance cameras surrounding the village and covering all entrances also increased along with the fence making. The cameras and the fences are still there, but new openings have emerged linking the inner streets of the village with the outer city in a more practical way. During the demolition there were guards checking the ID of everyone entering one of the checkpoints that one had to pass to get into the village. There are still guards patrolling the streets and guarding all entrances of the village, but they hardly look up when one passed by in October 2011.

The wrapping up of the village has different purposes at different times. During the Asian Games the main purpose was to beatify the view from the angle of passersby; the houses facing the outer streets were painted in uniform colors and impressive green arrangements were created surrounding the east, south and west side of the village. Only towards the north where the biggest buildings of the village are located were parts of the village unfenced.

Before the demolition the fence functioned to hide the decay and during the demolition the fence functioned to hide the destruction and seal off the construction site. The fenced village is both an example of a site and a population within being "put in place" and being "out of place" within the urban realm as described by Jacka (2006) and accounted for in the *Theory* chapter. Also the subverting of the fence is an example of how the users of the village negotiate the boundaries of the village as borders that can be challenged, with reference to Sennett (2008).

5.8 Xian Cun North East corner. Author's photographs, 2010, 2011.

5.9   Subverting and using fences in Xian Cun. Author's photographs, 2011.

5.1.7   ERADICATING/DISMANTLING THE VILLAGE

From late 2009 onwards the metal gates and wooden frames from the stripped houses were sold and piled up for reuse and recycling on the main streets outside the village fence. Inside the village the last few workshops were still producing their goods, but from early 2010, they were accompanied by the sound of drilling and dismantling of entire houses from the top down. Garbage was piling up everywhere.

Apart from the demolishing of public buildings in the midst of the village, the demolition work started with the outer parts of the village addressing the city grid. Towards the north east the temporary clothes market was removed and replaced by an impressive park-like area that was meant for the passersby to enjoy as it was shut off from the village by fences. Most of the housing compounds in the inner village are still standing while this text is being completed, although as open shells with windows and doors removed. From the openings of the walls one can see clothes hanging to dry, which is the only sign of habitation. The remnants of the village stand in stark contrast to the posters in front, declaring a harmonious urban development and Guangzhou to be the city of civilization.

5.10   Emptied houses in the midst of Xian Cun. Author's photograph, October 2011.

5.11   Dismantling village. Author's photographs, 2010.

5.1.8   FIGHT FOR THE LOCAL VILLAGERS' RIGHTS

In the summer of 2009 the local villagers started with two demonstrations daily, held in front of the big pink 'Xian Cun Sky building'. It is the administrative and political city hall of the village, hosting both the administration of the public institutions and the village committee. The building is located by one of the old banyan trees, but is a relatively new administrative center for the village, completed in the year 2000. Every day at noon and at 16:00 the locals would meet by the big staircase of the main entrance of the building. The place is well exposed to regular urban passersby, as it is located on the outskirts of the village, facing the main street of Huangpu Dadaoxi, with its many bus connections. When I visited in September 2009 the demonstration was still large with several hundred people gathering at noon. They sat inside the reception of the building and outside on the stairs and all the way out on the plaza in front of the building. They asked for the mayor to come out and talk with them and they asked for the mayor to resign.

The main clash between the local residents and the riot police happened on 13th August 2010. According to *South China Morning Post* (Yu 2010) the Hong Kong-based *Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy* said about 20 residents were wounded in this incident, where the riot police were reported to use teargas, stones and regular beating. The media in Hong Kong and Europe reported this brutal case, fronting stories of an old local man who had been beaten so hard he lay unconscious in hospital for weeks. According to the locals I interviewed a month later, this exposure in the media led the police to be less violent in their actions towards the local residents, but the situation was still very tense as of September 2010. The police had asked the demonstrators to sign that they would not demonstrate again. I do not know how many signed, but the demonstrations went on for months.

The local villagers' own figures indicate that several thousand people joined the demonstrations. More than 20 men and women over the age of 80 joined and they also said a student who took pictures of the demonstrations and put them on the internet was taken by the police and has disappeared since then, along with the pictures that were removed from the internet site.

5.12   Local villager demonstration. Picture with courtesy of local villagers, 2009.

The banner on the picture says: "The villagers have less than 450 Yuan per month and no social welfare. Why has this situation been like this for the last ten years? Save us and rescue us" and "Remove the power from the officers"[13]. In 2010 the riot police were patrolling the streets and overlooking the closing down of shops and people moving out. They would come in groups of six or eight to support the contractors that came to shut down electricity and water or to ask people to vacate their houses. The local villagers claim that prior to this, and since 2009, representatives of the district authority would walk around the village and tell migrants to move from certain houses as they were listed for demolition. Those houses were, according to my informants, owned by people who had signed the petition to ask the village mayor to leave his post and to ask for the stockholders/villagers rights to access the economic files of the village.

5.1.9   WHAT RISES AFTER THE DEMOLITION?

Apart from the block north of Xian Cun where one finds older housing of eight to ten stories, the surrounding blocks are all filled with high-rises of 30 to 40 floors. Xian Cun will be a block resembling its new neighborhood and it will not be possible to distinguish what was formerly a field and what was formerly a village settlement. In the Xian Cun case they will not leave any old temples or use the logic of the former streets for the new structures. The whole village will be planned as if it was a *tabula rasa*. The migrant residents are the first to move to a new place, without the prospect of moving back again when an urban village is demolished. In central urban areas like Tianhe, the location is so attractive that the new apartments and offices will be sold and leased for prices that are unattainable for a typical migrant's salary.

---

13   Picture taken by local villager and handed to me on a CD along with other material gathered by the local villagers, among them several sheets with pictures with identity cards, names and fingerprints of all the local villagers who asked for an open and just process. The material has been handed further by the local villagers, to the authorities on various levels, and I therefore do not reveal faces in this picture that the authorities have not already seen.

190

In Xian Cun there were several waves of migrant moves from the village. Already in 2009 I met some former migrant residents[14] who had moved away from Xian Cun because of the demolition plans. They had been directly approached by representatives from the authorities knocking on their door to tell them the house where they resided was to be demolished, but half a year after moving out the house was still standing, they said. They collected paper in the back streets of the offices in Tianhe and continued the same job in the same location after moving to another village. Along the same street there were several collectors from the same province and they lived in several different villages. They expressed how their place of work was their connection to the city and the place where they had a sense of spatial domination, while the place to live was a question of convenience and not related to continuous bonding.

The first concrete date of the demolition start-up was set for February 2010 and some migrants planned their move according to this. Some migrants told me they had moved several times from village to village and back again to the first village because of rumors of demolition, but no village they lived in had ever been demolished, so they became less nervous and more suspicious of rumors after a while in the city and they would not move until they saw the digging machines approaching[15]. In Xian Cun, when one wave of migrant residents moved away from the village because of the demolition plans, other groups would move in. Many of the newly arrived migrant workers took part in the demolition work either in the tearing down of the village or in removing materials for reuse. They tended to be more aware of the tense situation and more reluctant to talk with me.

In 2010, in a house opposite the park in the old main street, the authorities arranged an office that presented wall charts with plans of the whole area as imagined after the redevelopment. Also, examples of apartments were shown for the local villagers to judge the value of the compensation flats. The area of the village was presented in the plan as divided into two parts with two programs. To the east, facing the CBD they planned for it to be offices and to the west, they proposed housing. The village block will become a good address regarding location and accessibility, with high prices per square meter both for the offices and for the housing.

To me as an architect the plans of the apartments seemed not to be thought-through.

---

14   2009-11-17, two paper collectors in CBD.
15   2008-12-17, talk with wagon bike delivery men.

For some, they were narrow with little frontage and only one window. This resulted in apartments where only the bedroom had direct daylight and the possibility to open a window/door to a balcony, while the living room, dining room, entrance, bathroom and the kitchen had no daylight. Doors and walls were arranged without thinking of the flexibility of furnishing, and it was difficult to find room for wardrobes. The only accessible wall in the bedroom, would, if filled with wardrobes hinder even more daylight passing through the bedroom to the adjoining dark areas of the flat.
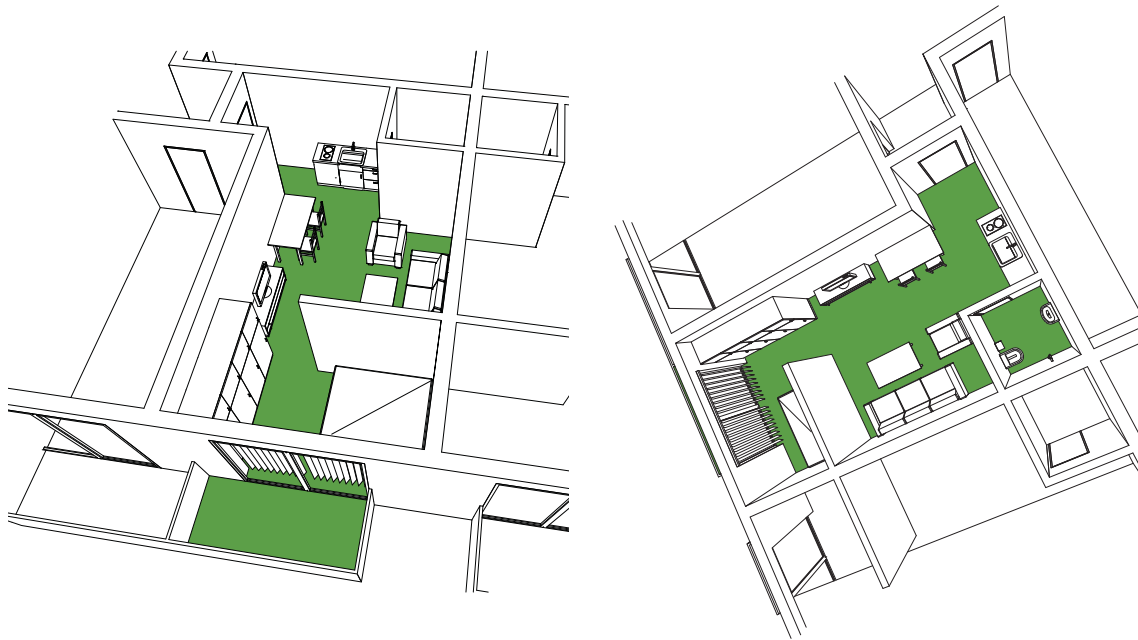
5.13   Plan of compensation apartment presented for local villagers in Xian Cun.
Illustration made by author, based on poster in information office in Xian Cun, September 2010. The flat is furnished as shown on poster.

In general, good apartments for young couples are not necessarily good apartments for established families. To me most of the flats in the projects planned in Xian Cun seemed to create fewer obstacles for young couples with few possessions than to established families bringing memories and gifts from a long life. They would find it hard to find a place to store the memories of their life or to use their home to cultivate hobbies or cooking in the small bedsit kitchen in the dark hall by the bathroom.

The Poly Real Estate Group and Xian Cun village committee jointly contracted the architecture firm Kling Stubbins (US firm) in February 2011 to complete a project of a mixed-use retail and office high-rise development of 141,000 square meters on one of the village plots facing the main axis of Zhujiang New Town[16]. To complete this project,

16   Picture of proposed project is available at: http://www.architekturezt.com/f2-2-mixed-use-concept-in-guangzhou-by-klingstubbins/ [Accessed: 2011-03-04]

a quarter of the village had to be demolished to provide enough land. Poly Real Estate Group, China's second biggest property developer[17], will in this project jointly run the parking and retail business of this building with the village administration of Xian Cun, while they separated the responsibility for sale and rent of one office tower each. The project has been put on hold as the demolition of this area of the village has not yet been approved by the provincial government asking for 70% of the villagers to sign the agreement first.

The Poly Real Estate Group is involved in several of the adjoining projects. South of the village they have constructed a 40+ housing compound called 'Poly Whisper Apartments' and they have a business tower of more than 200,000 square meters under construction in one of the former fields of Xian Cun. The local villagers paid attention to this project as www.stockstar.com describes this Poly project as requiring a total investment of 1.28 billion CNY for estates that are estimated to be sold for 18,000 CNY per square meter for a total sale price of 1.98 billion CNY. This gives a return ratio of investment on 43.51% and a ratio of net profit of 22.46%. The local villagers have asked why the many projects done in partnership with the village government in and around the village do not give compensation back to the local villagers when this scale of profit for the companies involved is indicated; they believe that either the local village committee is incapable of running their businesses well or there is corruption involved. The local villagers accuse their local leaders of both, as they are left with a monthly share of 450 CNY in a development business that makes some companies and even some local villagers extremely rich. They name two local villagers being the two main local bribers, both unfairly gaining user rights of buildings, acquiring rents and sharing constructional responsibility among their kinship (local villager CDs 2009).

The local villagers claim they as stockholders are not listened to and that they are not given the possibility to see the details of how the committee spends the money from their land. In their documentation to the district authorities they list 20 big projects that Xian Cun village has been jointly responsible for. They are listed with the following information as seen in the example below:

Permission day: 2005-12-13

Construction companies: Poly and Xian Cun

Purpose: business and housing

Plot: G1-1

32 floors above ground
Three floors below ground
81,877 square meters
Map for reference

Other companies that are represented in these lists apart from Poly are; China Sea, Nan Ya, Fang Zhou and Sha He town company.

The urban transformation which for the village started with the city requisitioning land for urban expansion, and in return gave the village a share for self-development, has made the village committee a joint contractor for real estate projects that are supposed to replace the entire urban village. The projects are ambitious in terms of investments and exploit the block extensively in accordance with the density of the surrounding CBD.

5.1.10 LOCATION-ATTRACTION

Xian Cun is located five kilometers east of the old city center. Throughout the last part o last century, accessing the city center became more convenient, with improved infrastructure and public transportation. At the same time the closeness to the business and commercial centers of Tianhe became more important for the villagers' location, with walking distance to all the main shopping centers, offices and restaurant areas of central Tianhe. While the village lost agrarian land to urban expansion, it gained popularity among migrant residents who came to rent apartments in the village as it was in the proximity of the many jobs in the service sector or they were attracted by the prospects of facilitating the financial district through self-employed informal work. Urban villages like Xian Cun and Shipai became urban centers connecting an even bigger population than their own, providing services to the many workers from the construction sites nearby. Shopkeepers I talked to in Xian Cun said about half their clients did not live in Xian Cun but came to visit for the services.

Walking distance to the neighboring villages of Shipai and the demolished Liede also meant it was well-connected through the alternative tricycle transportation links between the villages. Busses run frequently on the main streets south, north, east and west of the village. It is only two blocks away to the Tiyu Xilu main metro crossing of line 1 and 3, and one block away from Liede station for line 5. In 2010 the Zhujiang New Automated People Mover System (APM)[18] opened, operating along the south-north axis of Zhujiang

---

18   Similar to their regular metro system, but operated with driverless trains.

New Town and its main attractions, passing by Xian Cun. For the many migrant residents working in the city and needing a cheap place to stay these urban villages became good options because of their convenience and connections to the infrastructure of the city.

5.14 Lan Qing, the new shopping street of Xian Cun. Author's photographs. A: Dismantled as of September 2010. B: Activity as of 2009. C: Paved December 2008.

5.1.11 NEW MAIN SHOPPING STREET

In 2003 the village authorities started to build Lan Qing, the new main pedestrian shopping street in collaboration with the city authorities to the west of the village. It is facing, and part of, the new grid of roads constituting the new main axis of the business district. It brought together the existing row of shops from the village with a new long building, housing shops and restaurants, and even parking. The new long building functioned as a fence to the surrounding city hiding the village that did not fit into the new image of the business district. Wide and with sufficient daylight, the new street was nothing like the atmosphere of the dim and dense village with its narrow old main street. This new street attracted people from all over the city, people who would never visit an urban village. I interviewed one construction site supervisor in a plot south of Xian Cun[19] who said he had never visited Xian Cun, but during our talk he revealed that almost daily he went to eat his lunch in the new pedestrian shopping street. When I pointed out that this is also part of Xian Cun he said he did not know that. In this way the new street has succeeded in giving the village a new face. It represents what the village authorities wanted it to be associated with; a certain kind of order and harmony. In the representational office of the village authority they displayed a poster of dos and don'ts about how to treat the façades of the shopping areas of the village, and the new main shopping street was the role model put forward, with its lane of commercial signs, all being equal in size, and in a strict line. The street was tidy and clean, with no street vendors or visible illegal activity. In the new building the village authorities hired out the commercial spaces directly. Many shops and restaurants in the street represented big Chinese brands seen all over the city. It was almost as if this part of the village had a city camouflage. It was assimilating the city, or making the city assimilate this part of the village, creating a new type of symbiosis between the city and the village.

In late 2008 new paving stones were laid in the shopping street, perhaps done as a way to raise the value of the adjacent buildings in the course of the ongoing compensation dialogue. That was what people I spoke to in the street back then told me. In their argument regarding the unjust compensation, the local villagers questioned why this particular street had been upgraded so much compared to the rest of the village and answered by pointing at the house owners of this area and their relation to the village officials. This hinted not only at the street being upgraded to improve the compensation for average villagers as such, but also indicates that the upgrading of this street increases the compensation value of the adjoining houses for the benefit of their private wallets.

---

19   2009-11-19, construction site supervisor south of Xian Cun

196

5.15   Aerial view of Xian Cun with Lan Qing, the new shopping street in front. Notes by
local villagers addressing the many influential people owning houses in this street.
Illustration with courtesy of local villagers, 2009.

In summer 2010 the row of low buildings built in 2005 was demolished and replaced by a fence and massive greenery including grown trees leaving the new main shopping street with shops only on one side. Most of the former shops were gone and were replaced by shops facilitating the needs of the demolition workers needing pickaxes, helmets and work shoes etc. The shops with items for the migrants working in the service sector were gone.

5.1.12 OLD AND NEW SHOPPING STREETS

In 2008 walking down the new main shopping street one could see remarkably dense and dark alleys running into the heart of the old village. Most of these narrow lanes did not attract any of the visitors of the new shopping street. One could spot some neon signs attracting attention to businesses and shops, but they were meant for a different audience. Xian Cun had a bad reputation among the city residents of Guangzhou, as a place they only read about when crimes had been committed. Many urban residents would never visit the urban villages. They had no reason to go there. Some of the translators I used said they had looked up on the internet and found stories about Xian Cun concerning late night murders. Visiting the new shopping street was something very

different from visiting the old main streets of Xian Cun. Some new businesses had been located in the first part of the old main street; a fashionable hairdresser, some food stalls and a very pinkish gift shop had appeared in the old street as a continuation of the new shopping street. If you went further than 50 meters into the old main street, however, you saw no more traces of the influence of the new shopping street. The shops and stalls in the old shopping street were smaller and less fashionable and were not part of any brands. Another thing one noticed was the number of the same type of enterprises. You would find five bicycle storage shops and nine telephone shops in this main street alone, each advertising the same low price for calling home.

5.16   Xian Cun old main shopping street. Author's photographs, 2011.

In 2009, it was possible to see further development of the old main shopping street inside the village with more shops to appeal to a trend-oriented clientele. The old main shopping street became a village thoroughfare, which allowed visitors to stroll along the street without entering the narrow and dark alleys of the village. It was very crowded in the evenings with visitors from the village or the areas nearby. They came just for the services. Most of them were migrant residents, and many were living in one of the many construction sites nearby. They would come to get their trousers repaired or to buy some new ones. They could rent books or get a meal and for many the lively street was an attraction in itself.

5.1.13   INFORMAL ACTIVITIES

From the official numbers in the Tianhe yearbooks I can see that 39 illegal internet cafés were shut down in Xian Cun in 2005, though one can assume most of this activity did not closed down, but just moved to less visible locations. Most of the migrant workers I talked to in the village said they regularly visited internet cafés in Xian Cun. I have only briefly seen open doors with some machines inside, though never displaying their activity with signs or advertisements. Contrary to the new main shopping street, the old main streets did 'allow' some illegal activity on a big scale, but on temporary premises only with street vendors and illegal shops. To be a legal shop both the locality and the owner has to report the business to the local authorities but with many of the shops inside the village this was not the case. In 2005 the local authorities closed 3,000 shops situated in buildings and in 2003 even more shops were closed. Additionally they even requested the demolition of 73 shop buildings. I talked to one seamstress who previously used to live in the main street and used the doorway as her workshop[20]. She had moved to a new flat in a different area of the village, but she felt lucky that she got the opportunity to rent the staircase of an apartment building in the main street for her business, right across the street from her former workshop. Blocking the staircase with a sewing machine of course goes against the fire regulations, and this shop had definitely not applied for legal status at the local authorities. However, it is not seen as a big threat to the order or the image of the village, and it had met no opposition so far. Every year the village administration would inspect the housing agglomeration in the village to see what illegal wooden constructions had been built since the previous year. Usually they would ask 400-700 house owners to demolish illegal wooden extensions due to fire precautions. The regulation states that the stairway should be minimum one meter wide for escaping, but temporary activities like a small seamstress' workshop can escape the eyes of the fire inspectors.

---

20   2008-12-17, talk with seamstress in her stairway studio.

Street vendors in Xian Cun

Selling on the street was illegal in Xian Cun and in Guangzhou in general. The local village police are to confront the ones they find. Usually the street vendors notice when the police are approaching and they will hurry to remove their goods. If they are caught, they do not have much power or resources to fight the authority, but they can try to argue their case to minimize the punishment. Sometimes they manage to talk their way out of receiving punishment if they promise to remove their shop and never to be caught at the same place selling goods again. Otherwise the punishment varies from getting their goods destroyed or expropriated to getting a fine of minimum 50 CNY[21]. In the annual reports from Tianhe's District Document Department they present numbers showing that the village police caught and reported 3,552 shops in Xian Cun using the street as a shopping area in 2003. In 2005 this number reduced to 2,200. I am not sure if this indicates that there were actually fewer street shops in 2005 than in 2003 or if it just indicates that in 2005 they used less resources to fight this activity. Also I was told that often the police would give street vendors (or bike couriers) false receipts for their momentary fines, and these incidents would of course not be reported by the police. During my visits the street shop activity in Xian Cun was very lively and present in the village, with hairdressers putting up their 'salon' with a bucket of water and a chair under a tree and rails and pavements used as temporary shops in a wide-ranging manner. This activity changed its course year by year, as seen in the example with the curving in the old main street later in this chapter.

In Xian Cun they prepared food for a number of wagons operating around the whole district. They faced the same type of punishment if they were caught selling their goods on a stand. In the urban village I came across many migrant workers who had started their own enterprises because they wanted to be their own boss. Most of them had started out working in a factory or in construction when they came to the city like Mrs Wang, but once the possibility occurred to them, or in some cases when other possibilities failed to arise, they were forced to make a living collecting garbage or selling goods in temporary stands.

5.1.14 CLUSTERING

In my surveys in Xian Cun and neighboring areas I saw typical clusters of certain production and activities. This is also documented by Lin *et al.* (2011) commenting on how the taxi drivers tend to live in the newer parts of the villages as they have a relatively

---

21   All this information I only have from talks with street vendors, none is verified with the local police.

high salary. In Xian Cun the potable water barrel sellers were located at the fringe areas of the village, with a short distance to their clients in the construction sites and office buildings in the surrounding blocks. I also observed several billboard factories in Xian Cun. Most of them were located in Jin Sui Lu along the south end street of the village. The majority of their clients came from outside the village so the location made sense, although the rent for this location was much higher than for a similar shop inside the narrow lanes of the village. One billboard factory I visited[22] had three branches; the shop facing the street to access clients, a factory inside the village for producing the signs and an adjoining design office for meeting clients in the northern part of Tianhe district. This last branch was not located in an urban village. The business was run by the Zeng family from Jiangxi province. When I talked to them in 2008 there were eight family members working in the business and another five employees. All the family members and their households lived in the same building inside Xian Cun. The family did not bring their skills from home, but had learnt the profession in the city. The first member of their family to move to Guangzhou came in 1996 and moved directly to Xian Cun, where he got a job in a billboard factory and learnt the skills needed, and two years later he opened his own factory. Another two years later his brother and his wife came to join him, and then another brother and another. Mr Zeng said there were 14 billboard workshops in the village. This case illustrates how the kinship of the hometown functions in relation with the urban village cluster. Only when there is enough work for yet another employee would the aunt move from the hometown to the city for example. It also shows how the foothold in the village is vital for the migrant networks in their ability to expand beyond the urban village, to a design office in the CBD for instance.

5.1.15 DUAL WORK/RESIDENT SPACE

Most of the billboard enterprises were family businesses with migrants originating from the same province and most of them were organized as dual private/commercial spaces, as the family members all lived in the workshop. They were also organized as a flexible working/relaxing area, as some worked while others cooked, took care of children, watched TV or talked inside the same confined space. When they opened the gate in the morning you saw into a home with a big dining table in the center. They finished one by one, put their chair in the corner and brought out the sign materials and the paint, temporarily occupying 'their' share of the public pavement. The big table was stored away when the rice soup was finished as the floor was needed for the signs and clients. The workshops were organized in a flexible way, and also the location along the main

---

22   2008-11-25 Mr Zeng, man running a billboard factory

city grid provided flexibility regarding the operating mode, similar to that of the bicycle carriers discussed in the *Theory* chapter. I believe many migrants are dependent on this type of flexibility provided through the spatial interaction with both the city and the urban village, due to a lack of domination of space within the city. The limited resources in the village are already so densely exploited, without this flexibility in time and space sharing their limited powers would leave them no spatial latitude.

5.1.16 XIAO MEIZHOU'S VILLAGE

In Xian Cun I talked to Xiao Meizhou[23], a 30-year-old woman who manufactured and sold embroidered soles on a carpet on the pavement outside her rented apartment. She started to work in a textile factory when she came to Guangzhou and she moved from a dormitory outside the city center to Xian Cun when she could no longer work in the factory and live in the dormitory because of her baby. Her daughter was one year and four months old when I visited them for the first time in November 2008. Inside the gate of the house one could see that the whole building was just an extension of the neighbor's house, exploiting whatever space was originally intended for air circulation. The ground floor was flexible, intended for future merchandise activity with a high ceiling, but for the time being they had put in an additional floor to allow for more individual apartments to be rented out. All the partition walls were easy to remove, one-layer corrugated steel boards with no noise insulation. The 'apartments' can be categorized as shacks placed inside a building. Xiao Meizhou lived on the ground floor, renting about five square meters with a height to the ceiling of approximately 1.90 meters. The first room one entered was furnished with a bed, a table and two small stools. To make it more beautiful she had put commercial posters for shampoo on the walls. There were no windows in this room. In the back there was a tiny room with a sink and a toilet in the corner. It functioned as both kitchen and bathroom. This room had a window facing a narrow air shaft, only allowing for a minimum of air and daylight. Xiao Meizhou described how in the summer this was a hot and humid place, and in the winter it was a chilly and humid place.

---

23   2008-11-27, Xiao Meizhou; sole-seller and mother taking care of her child.
Xiao Meizhou is a fictitious name; she came from the city Meizhou north east in Guangdong province. This city has a population of about five million, and many migrants in Guangzhou come from this city. I met several in Xian Cun. Xiao Meizhou made a point that she had only moved within the province.
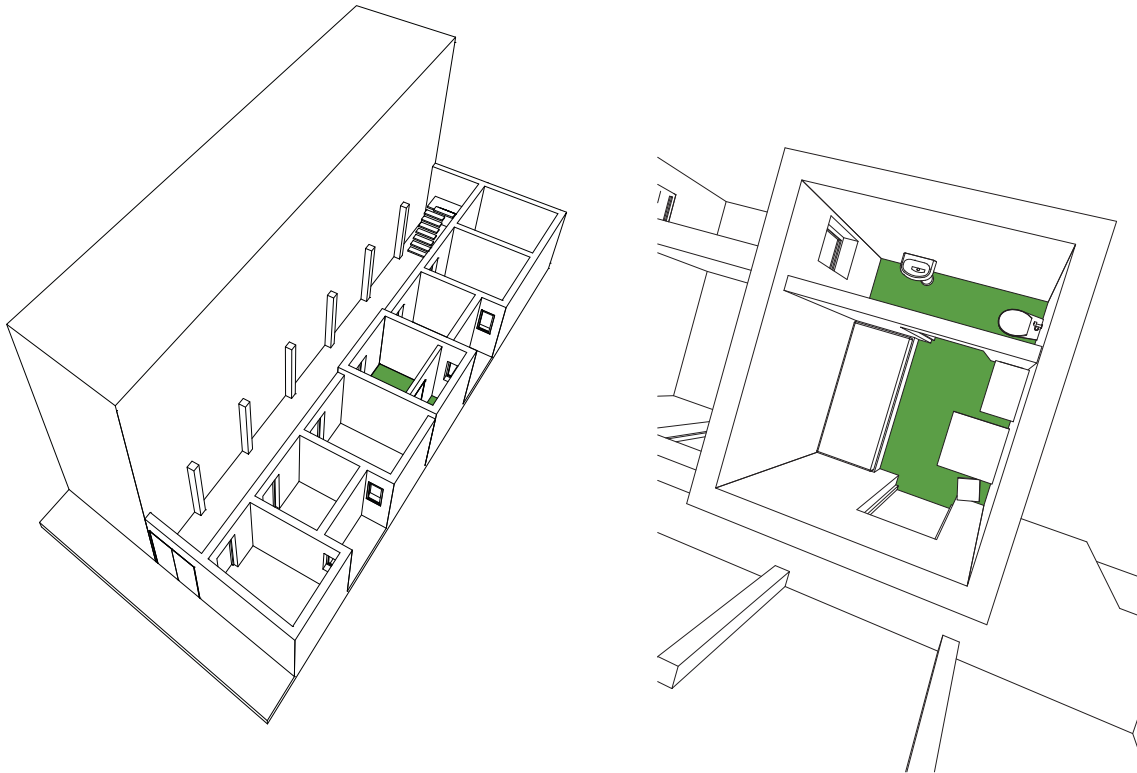
5.17   Rendering of Xiao Meizhou's apartment in Xian Cun. Author's illustration.

The apartment she shared with her daughter was close to the park in the village, also right outside the house there was a curve in the street allowing for a couple of temporary street vendors to be located without blocking the pedestrian traffic. Xiao Meizhou made a living from embroidering soles in the evenings when her daughter was asleep and she brought her daughter in a child carrier when she sat down to sell her soles in the daytime. Often grandparents will take care of the children in the home towns, allowing the parents to access more regular work in the city, but Xiao Meizhou did not want to part with her daughter. Also her mother had been in the city to take care of the daughter to allow Xiao Meizhou to work, but she had fallen ill, and returned home. Xiao Meizhou had a husband who worked in a factory in a nearby town, but he lived in the factory dormitory and could seldom visit. He would contribute his salary to their flat in Xian Cun; the soles she sold could not pay the bills alone.

Recreational areas
I met Xiao Meizhou in the park where she and many other mothers and grandmothers would bring their children. It was a cold day and as the daughter had no shoes she carried her on her back in a child carrier she had made herself. The park was a free service, facing the main street. It was fenced, and opening hours were 9-12 and 14-19, meaning most

5.18   The lake in Xian Cun. Author's photographs, 2008.

migrants would be at work during the opening hours. It was next to the only remaining lake in the area. Most of the lakes had been filled with soil and used as building plots, but this lake was kept because of its location making it good for *feng shui*. It provided good light conditions for the adjacent buildings and the park, but it was dirty and smelly, though it was recognized as being good for the fortune of the village. In a way this lake is disorder representing traditional harmony/order. The park had big trees, beautiful flowers, a fountain, some play apparatus for children and several benches, but it was in total not more than 500 square meters, and it was the biggest of only three parks serving the 50,000 inhabitants of the village. The migrants would often use the pavement of the new alleys west of the village as a recreational area. This was a spacious area outside the dense village. Here people would sit and wait for work, and the homeless would sleep in the bushes. Xiao Meizhou said she had chosen the apartment partly because of the location near the park and the curving of the street. She believed it gave her daughter light and good air compared to the rest of the village. She would also visit the pavements of the new alleys with her daughter sometimes, but mostly they would stay close to their apartment. She said they had everything they needed in proximity.

5.19 The park in Xian Cun. Author's photographs, 2008.
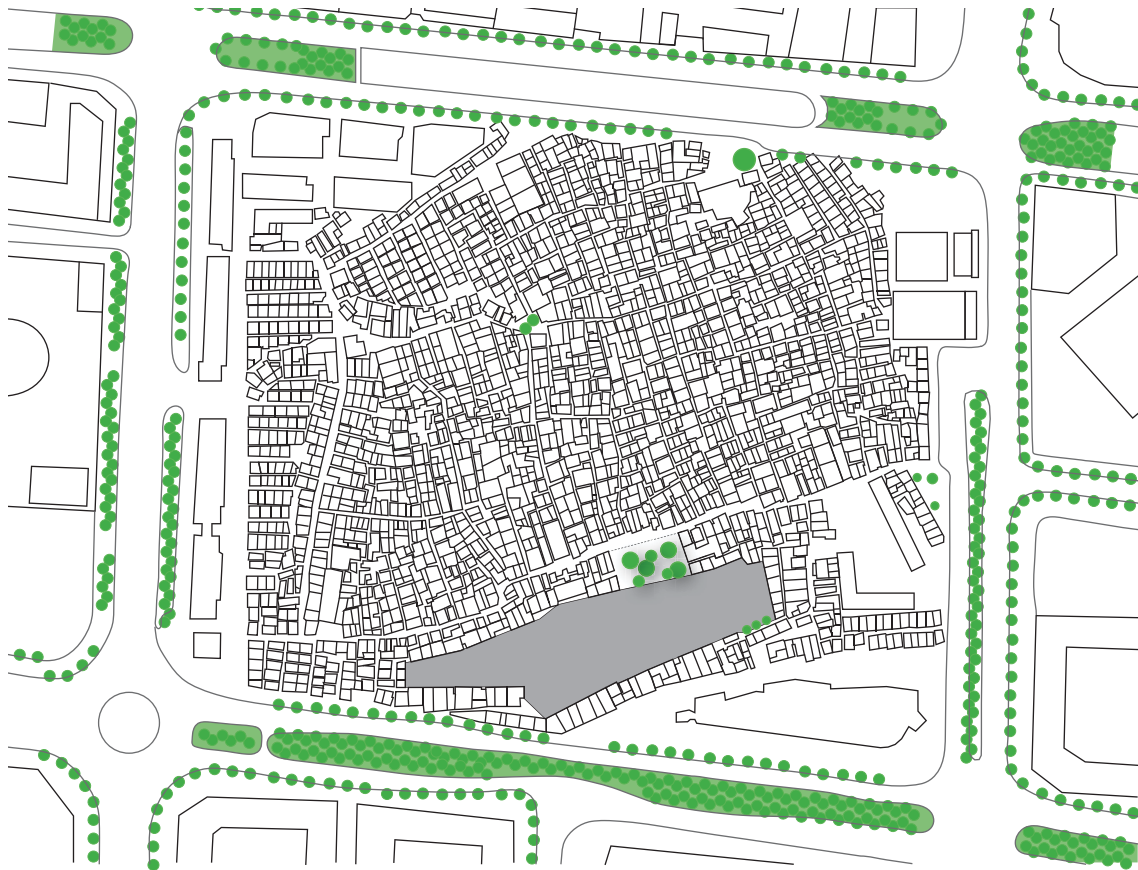
5.20 Plan of Xi an Cun with green structure. Author's illustration.

5.21   The curving in Xian Cun. Author`s photographs, 2008.
Plan of curving in old street with A: Mrs Wang`s bicycle shed,
B: Xiao Meizhou`s apartment.

The curving

In the curve of the main street where Xiao Meizhou was selling her soles it was always busy. Across the curve on the other side of the street there was the bicycle shed mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. That house still bore the sign over the door indicating it used to be a village school (the Confucian school). The couple living and working in the building used the façade facing the plaza only for a small announcement of their business and for drying clothes, while many other activities took place outside the building. In the *Theory* chapter I discussed how these activities illustrate how the regulative boundaries become negotiable borders through time and space sharing of interests and how they use soft power and minimum force when temporarily occupying a place in the village. I will here add how this practice of using a place within the sphere of the urban village can be a positioning traversing the village, establishing local-local connections beyond the village with reference to the last part of the *Theory* chapter.

Outside the bicycle shed there was enough space for some street vendors to sell their goods, but there were no formal rules on who should use this place. Every time I passed the street I could see different people using the place, most of them would only stay for a couple of hours. Some days I would see a carpet full of clothes, or second-hand products being displayed. Almost daily two migrant women from Kunming would come to collect cardboard and plastic in the plaza. I observed and interviewed them in this plaza two years in a row[24]. They lived in another urban village, half an hour's walk away, but came to Xian Cun because this was a more resourceful village with better material supply and less competition because many of the migrants living in Xian Cun were working in the service sector in the financial district and not in self-employment. This exemplifies how different groups of migrants relate to various places within the city, among them places within several urban villages, and not only the village where they reside. Their spatial domain is limited to a reasonable walking distance with their fully loaded wagons.

Xiao Meizhou, however, would never use a place outside the village for selling her soles, as she had to bring her daughter when working and she wanted the convenience to easily get back home.

Positioning within the village

Xiao Meizhou is a young female migrant living in the central districts of Guangzhou, even though she has no regular work in the area. If she chose to live in an urban village further

---

24   2008-12-04, talk with two women collecting cardboard and plastic.

away from the business center her monthly rent could be reduced from 400 CNY to 150 CNY[25]. Alternatively she could get more space or comfort for the same cost she had to pay for her very small apartment in the core city village if she moved. She also worked right outside her door, even though the village had several young females doing the same as her, making it tough competition selling soles to other migrants on the streets in Xian Cun. All this is may be explained by the fact that the local migrant clients in this village have a better income, and thus they are more likely to buy her soles for a price that gives her profit than in an urban village further away from the city center. Also the street vendor activity is more accepted within the urban villages than in the business area, and her activity there could result in much harder punishment. She expressed how she had made a judgment balancing the opportunities in different locations. She had balanced resistance, risks and possibilities in her business, finding that this village provides the best conditions for her.

During my visit to Xian Cun in 2008, the activity at this widening of the street was an exception from the rest of the street, being calm in respect to street vendors. The plaza always displayed some sort of commercial activity.

In 2009, the residents of the village received a public announcement saying that the village would be demolished before the Asian Games in November 2010, and speculation suggested that the village would be demolished in February 2010. In late 2009, the residents saw how the patrolling got less strict as a result of the village authorities not focusing on the enforcement of street order anymore, and street vendors started operating in front of the shops all along the old main street, and not just in the plaza. Although some residents had started to move away because of the talk of demolition, the village streets were as lively as ever.

When the demolition started in late summer 2010, some shops were still operating in the old main street, but the typical street vendors were replaced by the recyclers of construction elements of gates, doors and windows. Many of the former migrant residents working in the service sector had moved away, and the apartments were taken by migrants working on the demolition of the village.

In my last visit in October 2011, most of the buildings were vacant, but small stalls and street vendors were using the space in front of the former shops to display their goods.

---

25   Xiao Meizhou paid 400 CNY per month in rent for her small apartment in 2008. I interviewed people in Shigangxi Cun also in 2008 paying 150 CNY for much bigger and better apartments.

The old school/bicycle shed was empty and roof-less, but one night I saw it used for a big banquet by the local villagers mobilizing for a continued fight for their compensation. The plaza in front of the old school was once again one of the liveliest places in the village.

5.22 Old main street commercial activity. Author's photographs, 2009, 2011.

5.23 Embroidering soles. Author's photographs, 2008.

Soles and shoes

Xiao Meizhou sold homemade and machine-embroidered soles wrapped in plastic and put on a carpet on the pavement. I praised her homemade soles, but she wanted me to buy the machine-made ones, saying they were prettier; more colorful and figurative. I first tried to resist, and said her homemade soles were more beautiful than the machine ones, and that I wanted to buy a pair of those, but finally she persuaded me to buy three pairs of machine-made soles for her fixed price of 10 CNY altogether. During a later visit I bought one of her homemade pairs for 100 CNY.

Xiao Meizhou said she had learned to embroider herself, and she said she also created the patterns herself for each of the pairs along the way. Every pair I saw was different. Making one pair took her a week, as she could only work on this when her baby was asleep. In November and December, being the start of the cold season, one could see many migrant women sitting in the sun outside embroidering in their spare time.

Xiao Meizhou would first build up the sole with a felt or denim base with cotton-cloth on both sides. Sewing these layers together would be done on a sewing machine. I did not ask, but I do not think she had a machine, as I saw none when visiting her small apartment. She probably went to one of the ladies in the village providing this service.

210

The embroidery is usually strict color- and pattern-wise. There is a back and a front side, but the work is done so neatly that one can judge the quality of the work by the standard that the pattern should also be beautiful from the back. Xiao Meizhou showed me the back sides with pride. She uses a ruler and a ball-pen to draw the precise pattern directly on the sole before applying the stitching. She explained how the soles can function as insulating when the thread used for the embroidery is of wool, or it can be airing, allowing air to flow through, using very hard string and tight stitches to create a dune-like effect on the surface. The machine-made soles' quality was poorer in this regard, and their practical use not as good as the handmade ones as they were made with thin synthetic thread. For the women practicing the craft of embroidery it is still a work of pride, attracting recognition among fellow migrants. They would proudly lift their feet from their shoe and reveal a unique pattern among each other.

Xiao Meizhou did not only produce soles; she also produced the shoes she was wearing. She did crocheting to make colorful clogs. She is one among many in the informal shoe and sole production line in China, producing for her own use and her fellow rural migrant clients. In the *Photo Documentation Project* we also got pictures showing this procedure, documented by a proud husband waiting for a new pair of straw-plaited shoes from his wife's hands.

Formally, in 2009 China produced nine billion pairs of shoes, making them the biggest producer and exporter of shoes in the world (China Footwear Market Analysis 2010). Almost half of all the pairs of shoes consumed in Norway annually are produced in China. In Sweden the import of shoes from China has grown from 2,000 tons of shoes in 2000 to 14,000 tons in 2007 (Hur skor vi oss? 2008).

5.1.17 VANDAL SANDAL

I imagined a project intended to produce embroidered sandals in vanishing villages before demolition to collect cultural impressions of vanishing resources, emphasizing the cultural baggage of the migrant residents of the urban villages in Guangzhou, when elaborating the many layers of meaning within the embroidered soles.

The first few times I visited Nanting Cun and Xiaozhou Cun (2005, 2007, 2008) I saw the local villagers stretching thin cloth over big wooden frames, dusting pattern on the cloth and stitching sequins in intricate patterns. Women and children would do this. The frames would be leaning up against walls and fences or put on trestles in the narrow alleys. I have not seen any traces of this activity in these villages during my visits over the last

few years, the last time I saw it was in 2009. During the years I have, however, seen many migrant women embroidering or knitting on the streets of the urban villages in their spare time, but these are also activities changing face along with all other transformations in the urban villages. I have observed knitting, sewing and embroidering on the streets in all the urban villages I have visited so far. When I visited urban villages in October 2011, I did not see many women embroidering soles, but several young shopkeepers would sit by the desk and embroider while waiting for clients. This was a new type of embroidering, with fixed pattern sheet instructions, with motifs of beautiful landscapes to hang on the wall at home when completed. Several times I have commented and showed an interest in this activity and my translators have on a few occasions said they could not understand how people want to do such a thing on the street as it looks "so rural". No modern urban girl would do such a thing I have been told. Ngai displays this same view in her book *'Made in China. Women factory workers in a global workplace'* where she writes about '*dagongmei*' or working sisters that: "Their main pastime – knitting – further imparted a distinctly rural image"(Ngai 2005, p. 115).

To me this simplified 'rural image' is a bad excuse for neglecting to appreciate that the embroidery practice is a valuable cultural expression that carries knowledge and conveys a collective memory. In one of his interviews with Obrist, Ai Weiwei talks of why he often uses common objects in his art. He explains why he uses things like shoes or tables saying: "These objects are already cultured – people have already put a lot of knowledge and thought into them" (Obrist 2011, p. 57 citing Ai Weiwei).

In the embroidery example, however, the importance is perhaps not only in the objects, but even more in the crafting: I gave a workshop at Bergen School of Architecture (2007) where a joint group of Chinese and Norwegian architect students looked at the places outside the security fences protecting the cruise ships and the people frequenting these places. The Chinese students pointed to the fishermen using these sites. Every day, whatever weather, you can see men fishing at Bontelabo pier and when you address them you find they all come from abroad; from Poland, Estonia, Iran and Turkey. Many of the immigrants the students talked to said they did not like to eat fish. They did not fish to self-support in the economic sense or to make money, but they said if they had not been fishing, they did not think they would survive as an immigrant in Norway. They expressed how they needed the contemplation as the situation of being an immigrant gave them so much to think about. They would not talk much, but they stood side by side looking out to sea. Many of them did hard labor as a living, and they did not have much money to spend. Most of them had been fishing as a child in their home

country and they talked to us about their memories of fishing with their grandfathers or talked of the different techniques they needed to fish in the sea compared to the river at home. Building on Brickell and Datta (2011), I could argue they are activating memories and connecting experiences from different locations as a way to include their past, their experience, their dreams and their thoughts into a "multi-scalar locality". The embroidering by migrants in the streets of urban villages may also play a similar role as the fishing by immigrants does in my hometown of Bergen. For many it is not an income, it is a hobby, but not insignificant as agency, nor as working with situatedness. It can be a way of bridging their subjective positioning as migrants in the city when they sit down in the shade of a tree on an old stone bench in a village in the city doing what their grandmother in their childhood home has taught them.

The time-consuming crafting of beautiful soles that are hidden in the shoes represents a Chinese logic very different from the way the modern cities are transformed, both in regard to how important the branding and flashing of an impressive face or the façade of a building has grown to become, and in regard to how to treat what is hidden, like what role one puts on the urban villages hidden behind the fences and more subtle ways of hiding migrants "out of place" in the urban order as accounted for in the *Introduction* and *Theory* chapters.

The name 'Vandal Sandal' seems perhaps speculative, but in the Chinese tradition of shoes carrying names like; 'Warriors' or '*Hiuli*' and 'Flying forward' or *'Fei yue'*, shoe-brands commonly refer to both characteristics of the individual and characteristics of relations to the surrounding. The Chinese shoe industry has a tendency of branding freedom and choice, though I have not looked at this in much depth. As we can now see the same focus with the branding of urban transformation as the modernist expression, I think the shoes could be the first to counter or question this urban ambition. A 'Vandal Sandal' representing the vandal walking out of the village leaving a pile of crushed buildings, or for commenting on the vandalism is not off-track in this context. It can be a "transhistorical assemblage" (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 445).

A slender start of a project or a spatial narrative of its own

The initiative of the 'Vandal Sandal' was an example of a reaction to the helplessness one can feel when a place like Xian Cun with all its qualities is about to be eradicated. I have heard of a Chinese artist that started to collect street-signs for the villages that are eradicated, not as a curiosity, but as a sign of loss. Another expression of this is photographers and artists who document the village houses with signs of 'demolish'

painted on their walls[26]. It was hence in a feeling of despair I manufactured the first 'Vandal Sandal' in Xian Cun.

I had an intentional idea of writing a short article for a Chinese magazine about this first 'Vandal Sandal' as a recipe for readers to go out and do the same; document and report, to make a new reading of the different demolitions of urban villages in the city of Guangzhou or beyond. I never did, as I still question the point in this, but I include it here because it reveals a cultural practice and vivid expression of a rural-urban continuity that has come to be practiced in the realm of the urban villages, and the story of manufacturing is interlinked with my talks and observations on spatial practice in Xian Cun during the demolition. When I have my doubts it is because it is perhaps too deterministic and does not point to the future potential, it is like saying that once the vandalism has made its course on the urban village only destruction is left, and that is too bombastic; the sandal moves on and with them the people with the cultural expressions and their way of handling a new situation with their baggage of their rural past can take us in many unforeseen directions.

> "…when one engages in a continuous variation of variables, instead of extracting constants from them … with the legal model, one is constantly reterritorializing around a point of view, on a domain, according to a set of constant relations; but with the ambulant model, the process of deterritorialization constitutes and extends the territory itself." (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 411)

Producing Xian Cun Vandal Sandal

I was in Norway when the sole was made. Chen Jie Lin, my research assistant, was asked to visit Xian Cun and find a person making soles and ask her to produce a pair. She was asked to give a good price for the soles and to collect as much knowledge as possible on the sole-maker and the pattern. Some sole makers would use very abstract geometric patterns while others would select very figurative patterns. Chen Jie Lin could not see anybody making soles on the streets the day she visited and she started to ask around and in the very first place she asked, the first bicycle shed of the old main road, they had a whole box full of embroidered soles, but no-one present who could make one. They said they knew of a women close by who often sat embroidering soles on her doorstep, and Chen Jie Lin found her home. The woman said she was willing to embroider a pair, but she said she would need one month to finish it as she had plenty of other things she

---

26   For instance Wang Jinsong and his work *'Chai'* ('demolish') - one hundred signs of demolition. 1999.

needed to do. This was at the time of the demolition and to make sure the women had not moved away before the sole was finished they exchanged telephone numbers. After a month she called back. She still lived in the village and had completed the task. She had made a pair of soles size 37 with the same pattern that she had previously made for her husband. It was a black bird sitting on a branch with a conifer in the back. She said this pattern was a personal expression to her. The two birds should sit and direct each other, one on each foot . She had invented the pattern. It was not related to tradition as far as she knew. In her hometown they used to make soles with geometric patterns but she wanted to make something more beautiful that reminded her of the countryside, not the city.

A few months later I visited Xian Cun (September 2010) and by then the sole maker had moved away from Xian Cun. We wanted to get a sandal produced in Xian Cun and get the pattern carved on the outer sole. By then many of the shops had moved out and been replaced by new shops directing their sales towards the demolition workers and we could not find anyone who could produce a sandal so we bought a pair of '*Kinasko*'[27] in a shop mainly selling workers' shoes. We then headed to the billboard shops to find someone who could mill out the words 'Vandal Sandal' and 'Xian Cun' in an elastic rubber mat we could attach to the outer sole as it was too thin to be carved. The first shop we entered was closed and the second had their metal blinds half rolled down, but we saw a woman sitting by the computer in the shop so we bent down and entered. She said they could do the job, but she would need one day to finish it, and she was not sure if her shop would still exist tomorrow as the patrols were asking the shops in that street to close down before the demolition. They went around every morning checking that the blinds were down and that was why she pretended to be closed with the blinds half shut. When we sat down we could see a man in uniform dismantling the electric wiring in the street outside. She still had electricity, and she had not started packing. The atmosphere was slightly tense. She finished the job in a couple of hours. The day after she was still there, but soon after she was gone, while the building is still standing as an empty shell as of October 2011.

---

27   Norwegian. In Norway these shoes are simply called China shoe; a black velvet casual girls' shoe.
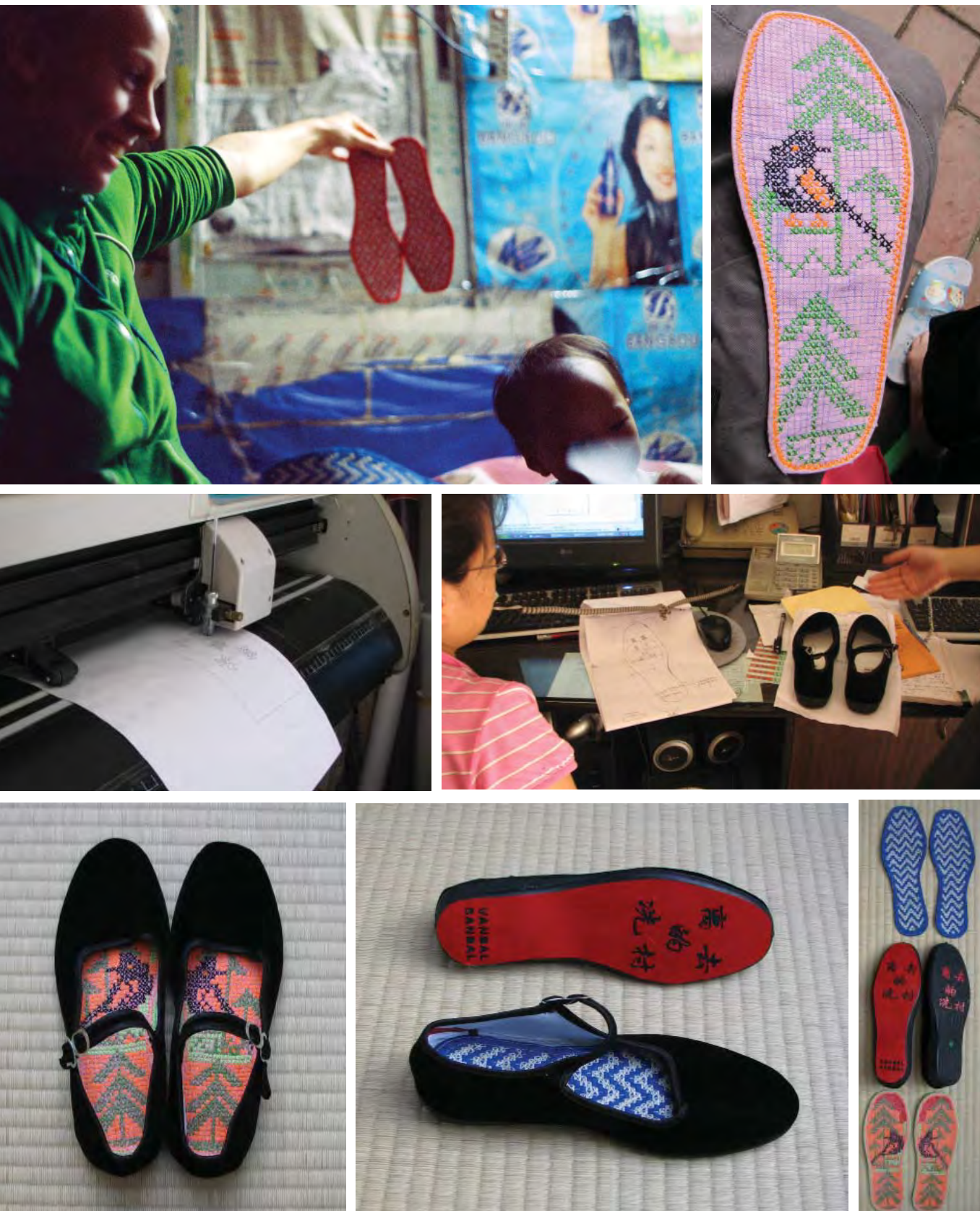
5.24 'Vandal Sandal' manufacturing in Xian Cun. Image left atop with courtesy of Lin Ying Hao, image right atop with courtesy of Chen Jie Lin. The rest author's photographs, 2010.

5.2 LIEDE, SHIPAI, TANGXIA CUN, XIAOZHOU CUN, NANTING CUN AND BEITING CUN

While Xian Cun is in many ways an urban village that has gone through a typical development from rural village to urban village, proceeding through a period of increasing density and now declining towards total demolition, every urban village takes its own path. I focused on Xian Cun in my research, but to illustrate how the urban villages are transforming differently, I have included this section about other villages in the vicinity of Xian Cun, such as Liede and Shipai, as well as peri-urban villages in Xiaozhou Cun and Nanting Cun to show how different conditions sometimes crave for or require other solutions, but just as often how the different conditions eventually lead to the same density or the same total demolition. Xiaozhou Cun could have been an example of a rural village that became an oasis of tranquility in the midst of the expanding city, but it is now building as aggressively as other urban villages. The housing developer initiative 'New Alley Movement' in Tangxia Cun could have developed into a different form of migrant participating development, but shows few signs of a different degree of concern for community than the regular local villager when exploiting their properties.

5.2.1   INTERCHANGE BETWEEN XIAN CUN AND LIEDE

In the neighboring village of Xian Cun, Liede, the demolition started in November 2007, as the first urban village to be "reconstructed" in Guangzhou. It attracted a lot of attention among local planners and architects to this process, as in the original plan of the Zhujiang New Town or Central Business District (CBD), Liede was the only village intended to be kept due to its beautiful river scenery with old low buildings and tree-lined alleys flanking both sides of the river. Liede village seemed tranquil and peaceful, even in 2009. When half the village was gone, the remaining village was like an oasis with a traditional and local character, in the midst of the enormous construction site of Tianhe. The new street grid of the city was placed right through the village, and the first part of the village that was demolished was the part that hindered the road and the access to the new Liede bridge. During the demolition they put up fences and removed one part at a time. The ancestral temples were 'moved' to a new site beside the bridge[28]. Before the demolition, the migrants moved to other urban villages.

---

28   I think the old temples were not moved, but torn down and replaced by new temples representing the old ones, as I saw pictures of the old temples still standing in the remaining village at the same time as the new temples were "(re-)constructed" on the new site, but that is not something I have been able to confirm. The important parts like the major beam might have been moved, but most of the tiles and ornaments are evidently new.

5.25 Remaining part of Liede in 2009. Photography with courtesy of Malte Lech.

5.26 Hunter Lane in former Liede. Author's photograph, 2011.

The row of houses along the river has been demolished but as of October 2011, a new row of two-story houses was about to be completed. These houses were "old style", but they were all brand new, preparing to house restaurants and shops when I visited. Ordinary people, at least ordinary foreigners, can easily be fooled to think these houses are renovated old houses, but once you start looking you see that every house has the same limited wooden shutters with the same carved motif and all other details are copied throughout all the buildings and fences along the river. The houses contribute with volumes that add some spatial qualities to the stroll along the river with the banyan trees still present, which is different from the 30 to 40-story buildings nearby. The street as a whole is far from as rich in expression as the row of old houses with individual characters would have been. The street with all its old looking new houses is now one project, branded with the name 'Hunter Lane'. Expropriating not just the plots, but also the houses of a selected amount of village buildings, would certainly have involved a different dispute over compensation and use rights of the buildings that suddenly became part of an attractive neighborhood with potentially high rents.

I talked to some migrants who had moved from Liede to Xian Cun after the demolition. They merged with quite a lot of newcomers to the village, and were not seen as a special social strain for the village to handle. The migrant population is constantly shifting, as the average stay for a migrant in Xian Cun was only half a year. Xian Cun was a ten-minute walk from Liede, and ten to 15 minutes towards the east you reach Shipai. Most migrants will regularly visit other urban villages to meet with family or friends, for shopping or as work-related visits. They will know what is going on in the other villages, and the migrants moving from Liede had an idea of what possibilities the different villages could offer them as newcomers. Among the migrant workers living in Xian Cun, I only spoke to people who had grown accustomed to the uncertain future of the place. Staying in the village was not regarded as being settled in the village. The uncertainty was part of the conditions they lived with:

> By the school gate in the main road there were three men on bicycle wagons collecting paper and cardboard. We asked them if they lived in Xian Cun and they all said yes. I got to know that one of them was from Liede when I asked if they had noticed new competition from the residents from Liede, when demolished. Two of them smiled and said yes and nodded towards the last one. He was eating rice in a pink plastic bowl; plain rice. He said he used to live in Liede until they demolished the place, and he said he did not mind, and also did not mind if they would demolish this village [Xian Cun], because he could always find himself a

new place to live. He used to work in the same business when living in Liede, and he could easily bring his wagon bike to a new place if things changed here as well. His family lived in the countryside and he would send back money. He lived in a shared room with three other wagon bikers and considered the room as a temporary dwelling.

(Extract from interview notes: 2008-12-18, talk with three men collecting paper)

The migrants I talked to from Liede had brought the work with them when they moved, working as wagon bikers and paper collectors in Xian Cun. The paper collectors I talked to[29] worked together with collectors from other villages, partly inside Xian Cun, and partly in the business district. They told us how the paper was sold to a recycling station in Xian Cun, and these stations are part of an unofficial and illegal activity. In 2003 the village authorities closed down nine recycling stations in Xian Cun according to the Tianhe yearbook, but they keep popping up in new temporary localities. The collectors keep track of where the stations move, and usually they will be loyal to the paper receivers, even if that means they have to walk longer to sell their goods. Every day, walking to the village I would pass a place that served as a recycling station for paper and I noticed the people at work there differed from week to week. When I talked to them I discovered they belonged to different recycling enterprises, and when one company was asked by the police to move, they would find a new location, but leaving the site unoccupied would function as an invitation to another company to temporarily install its service there, until they were also asked to move by the police. In this way the recycling stations were constantly on the move within the area, succeeding each other on a limited amount of locations. Together, in a way they occupied the place, but each enterprise would only occupy it briefly, just like the example of the street vendors in Xian Cun accounted for in the *Theory* chapter.

For the paper collector from Liede the move from the village was not the major pressure. He told me they could at that time (2007-2008) find equally nice rooms for about the same cost in Xian Cun and other neighboring villages, but the cause for discontent was the general worsening of the situation they saw due to the economic crisis. The paper collectors explained how their struggle to get a decent income was harder after the economic crisis. The price they paid for the paper was about the same as before but the price they got when selling the paper to the paper plant was reduced to nearly the half.

---

29   2008-12-18, talk with three men collecting paper in Xian Cun.

5.2.2   RENTING AND LIVING IN SHIPAI CUN[30]

For most of Jacka's interlocutors, "…rented accommodation was the preferred form of housing because it afforded a greater degree of autonomy, privacy, 'homeliness', and potentially better living conditions than the alternatives" (Jacka 2006, p. 105).

For the migrant population not residing in their work place (factory dormitories, barracks on construction sites or as live-in-maids), the most common form is rented accommodation. In the older parts of the city there are also some districts with a big share of migrant residents, and I will exemplify their stories in the section on Enning Lu area later in this chapter. For the majority of the migrant population the urban village is their preferred choice. This can have many reasons. In the newer districts of the expanded city, one often finds a flexible job market with many opportunities for both graduates and unskilled labor. In the area around Shipai, for instance, there is the center for computer technology. All types of shops and workshops related to digital technology are placed in this area. They need staff with graduate-level education but also people to transport the goods. Many migrants will live in Shipai and work in the digital market just around the corner.

I brought Mrs Chen with me to Shipai in October 2011. She came from Panyu to study at a university in Guangzhou in the early 1990s. After graduation she got a job working for a paper and several of the journalists there lived in Shipai. Through this network she first got a flat and lived there for a month in 1995, then for a short while she moved to the city center, then moving to Xian Cun and later back to Shipai for a longer stay ending in 1996. All together she lived in Shipai for about one and a half years. When she lived in Shipai she met with her future husband and they later moved together into an apartment in Shipai. He was a photographer and she was a journalist, and they both came from outside of the city. For the first stay in Shipai she had one room with a bathroom in a shed in the corner of the balcony. For the second stay they lived on the top floor and had a roof terrace of their own where they grew flowers. She said at the time when she was looking for rented accommodation she supposed she could get the best type of apartments in the urban villages like Shipai, as they could provide rather spacious and new apartments with a good connection to the surrounding city through buses running both north and south of the village. She did not consider living in an old apartment in

---

30   Shipai is the urban village in Guangzhou with most scholarly attention. I will not go into detail on this village, only refer to a few talks. For further reading see for instance: Yanliu Lin (2011) or the dissertation of Francesca Vazzano (2008).

the city center, as she thought it would be a lower standard of living for what she could afford. She said she preferred the neighborhoods of the older city compared to that of the urban village, but when it came to the apartments it was the opposite.

She had prepared for our visit. She had found an old receipt to check the cost of the roof top apartment, which in 1996 was 450 CNY per month. For the visit she brought a photo showing her and her fiancé on the roof terrace. We went to see if we could find the house she used to live in, to talk with the house owner, but we couldn't find it, as every house on the way had been torn down and rebuilt. It was not possible for her to recognize the way. She had not been to Shipai since she lived there, but we tried to reconstruct her way back 'home' from work. She would normally arrive by bus at the north gate, so we walked there. Although everything is different with new buildings flanking the street, she said she could recognize the place. They had pedestrian crossings over the street also back in the '90s. Proceeding from the village gate one goes through a narrow lane edged with stalls, and she said also back in 1996 they used to have this activity but not as many stalls as now. She used to drop by the food market on the way back home so we did too, and we found the right direction, but after a while we were lost. When she lived in Shipai she lived on the top floor, and that was the fourth floor. Now most of the buildings were seven to nine floors. Still the village seemed relatively bright and airy, at least compared to the darker areas of Xian Cun, and at the time, it also appeared very clean. There was hardly any rubbish on the streets. The many curves and angles of the streets allowed the daylight to reach the ground level and several trees, some small parks, a big sports field, and some ponds and plazas in front of temples enhanced the spatial qualities of the village.

5.27   Mrs Chen presenting picture of her on her roof terrace in Shipai.
Auther`s photograph 2011.

5.28 The north gate of Shipai with its surroundings. Author's photograph, 2011.

5.29 Courtyard house, Shipai. Author's photograph, 2011.

We passed one of very few courtyard houses, and were asked in by two local ladies. They said they had kept the house and still lived like they used to do. It was not an old traditional courtyard house. It was a house of three floors built in the last century. Their extended family all lived together there. They did not rent out to migrant residents. They said the reason why they did not tear it down and build a bigger house to rent out was the qualities they found in the courtyard. It provided them with plenty of daylight for the inner rooms and was their preferred place to cook, eat and drink tea. They had balconies on all floors and a roof terrace, meaning their way of life in the house was both introvert and extrovert, integrating the outside in their home activities. It was one of few physical examples of the spatial qualities the former village had possessed for its inhabitants. The surrounding area benefited from their personal choice of keeping the house instead of exploiting the plot in a denser manner, as they were also provided more light and air because of their neighbors' low house and courtyard.

5.30   Traces of stone floor in Shipai. Author's photograph, 2011.

We talked to a local man sitting opposite his own house. He had never been a farmer and thus he never got compensation for lost land. He was among the few local villagers who still lived in the village. He reckoned 70% had left, but he had no choice he said. Without financial compensation he could not afford to move. He noticed we looked at the old stones on the ground outside his house, and he told us he had made sure they were put down again after the road was repaired when the closed drainage was fitted. He said now there were only two short stretches left in the village with stone floor, and he took us to see the other place. He said his three-lane stone floor showed that this used to be a wide and important lane before. Now the three-stone width only made up slightly more than half the width of the street[31].

We talked to an old local lady. She was 92 years old and had lived in the village all her life. She asked where I came from, and I said Norway. She then asked what city I lived in, and I replied Bergen, and she said she recalled that name as her relatives had visited there last year on a tour of North Europe, hinting at the good economic situation of many local villagers. An urban village can both supply good accommodation for migrant renters and be a good source of income for the local villagers. When the local villagers in Xian Cun complained about their monthly share as stakeholders they compared their situation with that of the local villagers in Shipai who had much better interest rates.

Shipai is now all that Xian Cun used to be. It is a vivid migrant village with a grand and dense population. In the case of Shipai, it seems their status as an urban village is bit by bit becoming an attraction similar to that of the night markets in Hong Kong for instance. When visiting the 'computer city', tourists and other visitors drop by the commercial streets in Shipai to grab something to eat in one of their stalls, to look for cheap gadgets and to get a glimpse of something on a different scale from the enormous concrete high-rises in the area. A popular restaurant street also shares a border with Shipai.

---

31   I later refer to width of road/number of adjoining stones when talking of the migrant neighborhoods in the old city center at the end of this section.

226

5.31a   Street scenes in Shipai. Author's photographs, 2011.

5.31b Street scenes in Shipai. Author's photographs, 2011.

5.2.3 `NEW ALLEY MOVMENT' IN TANGXIA CUN

The 'New Alley Movement' or *'xinlinong yundong'* is accounted for by Lin *et al.* (2011) as a development initiative improving houses in urban villages to rent out to white-collar migrants who can pay for a better standard apartment in the urban village. The developers focus on it being a hygienic and safe place to live within the confines of the urban village. In Tangxia Cun in Guangzhou, I visited a 'new alley movement' unit in summer 2007. It was located in the midst of the urban village, but with simple access from the main roads outside the village, located near the main plaza with the pond. It was a building that didn't appear special from the outside, but once behind the properly locked gate one found a staffed reception with surveillance cameras monitoring the entrance, corridors and staircases. Everything was painted pure white, and appeared new, light, clean and modern. The staircases had real art hanging on the walls and the rooms for rent were furnished with new furniture, far from resembling the dormitory style. On the roof they had a recreational area with a barbecue pavilion and a small pond with water lilies.

5.32 'New Alley Movement' house in Tangxia. Author's photographs, 2007.

When visiting Tangxia and talking to the administration of this business they told me they would also use some resources to improve the streetscape around the houses in their projects. They would plant trees and clean the streets. For this effort they got attention in the local media and from the local authorities asking if this was the future of the urban villages; improvements from within by migrant entrepreneurs. In the example I visited they had not done much to improve the surrounding village, but they had been careful in selecting a house with a good location in the village. It seemed they mainly focused on their own houses and the introvert ambience. When they make outdoor arrangements or changes, it is on the roof of their estate, and not to provide a bench and a tree on the street for the passersby. They do not compromise on density, but use houses that exploit the plot as extremely as any others, but when entering within they have focused on enhancing the premises with more light, air and a feeling of space. The building I visited had wide staircases and visible fire extinguishers in all corridors. With open atriums and other spatial qualities the estate offered a different way of dwelling in the urban village. I agree with Lin *et al.* (2011) when she states that "one can not deny the speculative purpose of such projects [as] these projects do not address agendas such as social equity". They are not initiated for the common good but for the developers' profit, finding a gap in the market of migrant housing. They kept their financial calculations a secret but admitted they would only go into projects that returned a profit within a few years as the risk of investment would otherwise be too high in urban villages with demolition plans always fluttering.

5.2.4   XIAOZHOU CUN, NANTING CUN AND BEITING CUN

The University Island had a great impact on many suburban villages. Several were demolished to make way for the big university cluster but I will here address some villages that are still standing. While urban villages in other parts of the city have transformed in a certain way because of their interaction with nearby industrial or commercial areas, these villages have developed to respond to the arts scene and the more general university environment. Beiting Cun and Nanting Cun are located on the University Island, the latter located near Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art (GAFA) and Xiaozhou Cun is located a bicycle ride from GAFA, next to Yingzhou ecological park.

5.2.5   XIAOZHOU CUN

Xiaozhou Cun was the first village I visited, back in 2005. It was then a tranquil rural village surrounded by orchards and most of the residents were local villagers still growing

fruit. They complained that the pollution of the water made their harvests worse, but they had no other option than to continue growing fruit. The first few art professors and artists had moved to the village. For them it was a good option compared to living in the new University Island. Xiaozhou Cun was a beautiful canal village and the narrow stone paved streets were not for cars because of the numerous stairways and bridges crossing the rivers. The newcomers had settled in old houses in the village and they had opened a few studios, workshops and galleries. The local newspapers had already reported on the special atmosphere of the village for a few occasions, mentioning the very special oyster shell façades and a well from the Ming Dynasty.

Year after year the artists grew in number until they reached several hundred. Art students from the art academy would also be attracted to the village. For the students it was cheaper and more flexible to rent a room or an apartment in an urban village than to stay in the dormitories of the university. In the dormitories one would have to share a room with several others, often four to six students in each room, girls and boys separated and with strict curfew rules. In the urban villages it was possible to rent an apartment or a room to share with a friend of your choice for a lower price than residing in the university dormitory[32]. The new residents and all the visitors and tourists that were attracted from the city made up the market for the many new shops and cafés that were emerging. The number of concerts and exhibitions grew and in 2008 the annual Xiaozhou art festival was launched.

The biggest attraction from the start was the atmosphere of the tranquil village itself. For the new residents as well as the returning visitors, the cultural and commercial program was increasingly important. The local villagers saw the potential in redeveloping their plots to increase their income and the tranquil atmosphere was replaced with that of a rather hectic construction site. When I visited in 2010 the village still had the flavor of the former village, while in 2011 it had tipped over to become more of a tourist attraction that people drop by, rather than a place to spend a quiet day. The area under the bridge was transformed into a parking lot for the many visitors.

Entering the village in 2011 the overall impression seemed different to me, with what I assumed was a new pavement in front of the big yellow art exhibition hall. My translator, Mrs Chen, a journalist who had previously written about the village, said the pavement had been like that for a long time (but 'long' is a relative term in the phase of urban village

32   Xiaozhou Cun dwellings became more and more expensive though, but for other urban villages in the vicinity of the university one still finds cheap accommodation

transformation) so maybe it was not new, but it all looked more ordered and mainstream to me. It was not the typical old stones but a tiled floor. The houses surrounding the plaza were also freshly painted.

Inside the old quarters of the village there was a lot of building activity. One of the residents told us there had been more than 100 houses constructed in 2011. I am not surprised by this number, assuming it is correct. There were a lot of building sites still under construction, with concrete structures and stairs rising up several floors. I saw several five-story buildings. There were piles of tiles and bricks stacked along the narrow roads. One of the artists living in the village told us when he moved to the village in 2005 one could rent a whole house in the village for 250 CNY a month, while now in 2011, six years later the prices had increased ten-fold, with a typical rent of an old farmer's house being 2500 CNY. Since last year even more bars, cafés and student housing had opened, but we were told the number of visitors had gone down slightly. Mrs Chen believed it was not as popular among its visitors as before, and said some people from the city had started to get tired of the place.

One of the striking things about the appearance of the village was how many houses had started to get the same new façade material. One could see how they added thin tiles resembling bricks, but carelessly put on the walls, revealing their weaknesses in the corners where ends did not meet, and not caring about the tradition of ornaments. We were told that the local authorities had prioritized two streets in the village for 'upgrading', and in those two streets the house owners would be urged and paid by the village authorities to put up new façades to improve the impression of the old houses. This was sad to witness as it shows that the people in charge lack a sense of quality. The old brick walls had lasted for centuries and would last for several more. The new tiles they used were thin and fragile and the work was so poor in some places it looked worn down even though it was recently made. The new plaster decorations were prefabricated and did not resemble the original ones.

5.33a   Redecorating old houses in Xiaozhou Cun. Author's photographs, 2011.

5.33b   Transformation in Xiaozhou Cun.

One of the artists we talked to said the population was now a mix of 50% local villagers and 50% outsiders. He said the artists that originally moved to Xiaozhou had started to move out, but recently the population in Xiaozhou had also increased due to many art students not attending the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Art (GAFA), but preparing to apply for GAFA by attending one of the two drawing schools in the village.

Although with different characteristics and reasons for change, as with the more typical urban villages, Xiaozhou has had a sharp transformation curve. The villages reach a point where it is difficult to reverse the development and impossible to get it onto a more positive track, as the new houses grow taller and the whole exploitation of the village is one that only considers quick profits. Xiaozhou Cun could have been an example of a different path for the suburban villages, but I fear it will end up cramped, dark and worn

out. For the ones gentrifying the village in the first place it has lost its good reputation and as they flee of to the next tranquil spot, one must expect the market and its mechanisms to follow suit.

5.2.6 NANTING CUN

Nanting Cun is located next to GAFA, south of University Island. Prior to the university development, the village fronted the river but it was divided in two parts by the outer ring road. A couple of ancestral temples and some pavilions and large, old banyan trees were still located on the riverside, attracting local villagers and people from the city using the vacant streets on the island for bicycle tours, stopping by for an ice cream in Nanting Cun.

Also along the riverside lay a new settlement of shacks, built by residents who had lost their houses to the street connecting the campuses. The local villagers made complaints about the situation on posters standing outside the ancestral temples.

The fence

The village was supposed to be demolished in June 2010 to become the parking lot of the cricket stadium for the Asian Games. Since the demolition of the village was not conducted successfully before the Asian Games, the village went through a beautifying process instead. As in other urban villages all over Guangzhou, houses facing the surrounding streets were painted, new tilting roofs were attached and a fence was put up. The new fence surrounding the village was tall, and hindered most views inside. From the cricket stadium one could not see much of the village although it was the nearest neighbor; one could only catch a glimpse of the new tilted rooftops of the village. Compared to the previous roof-scape, with typical flat roofs used as roof terraces for drying clothes, the new roofs were visually in unison and seemed unused, or with an internal use only.

The fence was put up in 2010. Local villagers then told us they felt insecure and afraid what would happen in case of an emergency. There were too few entrances in the fence in their opinion. They felt imprisoned in their own village. They used to overlook the river and the paddy fields, now they stared at a wall. Unlike a gated community where people fence as a result of the pressure from outside, in the fenced villages the fence is protecting the surroundings.

Arriving in Nanting Cun we came from the south and entered by the village committee office. There was a fence surrounding the western part of the village, facing the south

234

ring road, GAFA and the cricket stadium in the north. It was still intact as of October 2011, but with fewer commercials and campaigns and many clean surfaces compared to the time of the Asian Games. From the south end side the village looked the same, but it is a village in transition, with many new buildings under construction. The new shopping center had been opened, with a curved green translucent plastic roof covering the streets in-between. On the ground floor there were many shops and restaurants. The shopping center was the only thing that had actually been built so far from the plan of the redevelopment of the village, mentioned and illustrated in the *Context* chapter.

5.34   The fence around Nanting Cun. Author's photographs, 2011.

The activities in the village were more and more centered on the activities generated by the students. As a result, it became an 'on-off' activity following the yearly rhythm of the students with quiet periods during the holidays and busy periods during semesters. We talked with a woman running a brush shop[33]. She had stayed in the new center since the summer, and was mainly selling private preparation courses meant for students applying for GAFA, similar to the two schools opened in Xiaozhou Cun mentioned earlier. There were workshops and studios for these training courses right across the street in the new center. She expected to close down next semester again, as the application process runs every year in winter, and these courses only run in the autumn semester. She said she was the wife of the owner of the shop, and her father and uncle had similar shops in Xiaozhou Cun and other places around. She lived in the village, in a nice place in the west end of the village, a bit more expensive, but worth it she said. I asked why they were located here and not in Xiaozhou village, but she said the rent was much higher there. In Nanting Cun she could rent the shop which was about 40 square meters with no facilities other than a plain room with light/electricity for 350 CNY per month. In Xiaozhou she could not find anywhere that cheap, but she said there were just as many clients here, so this location made sense. She sold plain painting equipment for low prices for beginners, while other shops inside the village offered more expensive and advanced tools for the more skilled students and artists coming for the specialized options.

According to numbers from GAFA they had 4,200 students living in their dormitory in 2007, while 1,092 students were living in Nanting Cun. Most students, both the ones living at the campus and the ones living in the village, would use the facilities of the village. It had an impressive row of restaurants run by people from all over China coming to Nanting Cun, but they also had several student-initiated places like bars, galleries and studios. It was a crowded village both day and night.

The fence changing conditions

The fence surrounding the village had changed the way the students from GAFA used the village. They could no longer just cross the street and get right into the village. They would have to walk past the fence either down to the south gate or along the north road to the new shopping center, doubling or trebling the walking distance to enter the village. All the restaurants that used to create the instant connection between the village and the university was now sealed off.

---

33   2011-10-11, talk with woman running brush shop.

236

For the new shopping center facing the north road of the village and the cricket stadium, the conditions were not too bad. The fence stopped just before the center, and they had plenty of customers from both GAFA and the neighboring university. A young man working in a shop in the center (selling all kinds of small things students might need; we bought an umbrella for the sudden downpour for example) lived 20 minutes away from University Island. He took the bus to work. He spoke English very well and I suspected he was a student with a part-time job, but he was not, and he said it was not common among the students to work in the village. He had worked in the shop for three months, but he said the shop had been located in the center for one and a half years. The center had been completed bit by bit and new shops joined along the way. It was still under construction with new locations being prepared.

Following the road we saw how many of the previous restaurants on the road behind the fence had disappeared. During the Asian Games the restaurants' extensions had all been removed, and their seating capacity had thus been drastically reduced. For some of the former restaurants they had started in a different business, while in other locations they had put up new removable tent structures to replace the old roofs. We conducted talks with the staff of all the remaining restaurants to hear how their conditions had changed after the fence was erected.

The first place we visited had visible signs of a previous lightweight roof housing the tables of the former restaurant. Now the roof was gone. They used to run a restaurant before the Asian Games, but not daring to invest in a new roof they had changed business strategy and started with food delivery instead. There were five bikes parked outside and one chef and one helper in the kitchen. They were about to prepare for dinner. They said they coped fine as there were not many takeaway places in the village.
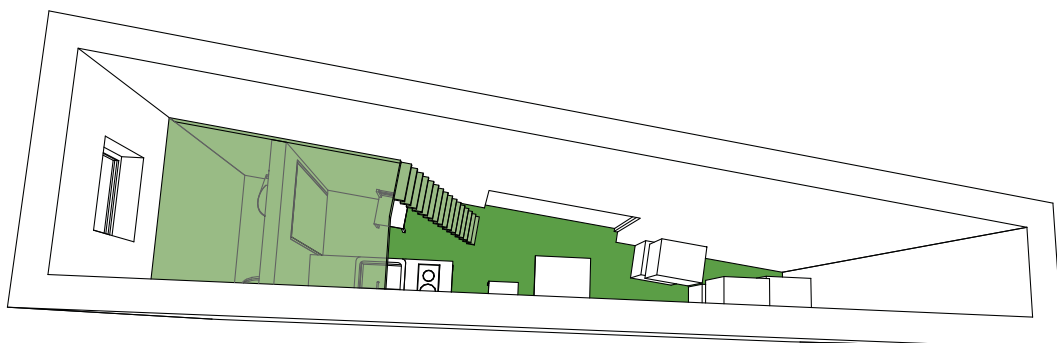
5.35a   Dual work/resident unit behind the fence 2011. Illustrations by author.

5.35b   Dual work/resident unit behind the fence 2011. Illustrations by author.

The next place we visited was a tiny little house with a lightweight tent construction outside. A smiling woman was sitting in the entrance preparing for the evening's barbecue. She said they had arrived in 2006, and then they were one of only two restaurants on the street with many clients from GAFA. They had moved their business from place to place within this road many times as their business grew. Before the fence and before the Asian Games they had six to seven employees and they had a big restaurant. Half a year prior to the Asian Games they all had to shut down their businesses in the street facing the cricket stadium. Half a year after the games, they were allowed to open again. They had returned to their hometown and lived off their savings while the restaurant was closed. Now, behind the fence they could not get as many clients as before, and even if they had just the two of them to sustain, they hardly made an income they could survive on. They lived in their kitchen, and slept on a small mezzanine. Their little boy had come to visit from their hometown. They were very friendly and asked us to sit down. When the woman had completed her task she went into the kitchen and the man came out and sat in the doorway and started preparing the meat. He said the local authorities had said they would remove the fence again, but he doubted it. Another restaurant owner from the same province as them had tried to remove part of the fence in front of his restaurant after the games, which had resulted in problems for him. Their worst competition now was not from the other restaurants behind the fence in the street, but from the new shopping center and other restaurants inside the village as the flow of passersby had changed.

The next place we visited was family-run too, having established their business in a big restaurant three months prior. They were migrant residents coming from the same

hometown as the couple who arrived in 2006. They had heard about Nanting Cun in their hometown and they had moved directly from home to this village to try their 'luck' as they expressed it. They said sales had been worse than expected. In the beginning they assumed it was because of the summer holidays for the university, but the conditions had not improved a lot. Their income did not correspond with the cost of renting the place. They believed that the fence would be taken down soon, that was what they had heard. They said very few professors and staff from GAFA would visit, mostly students. I remembered I had visited the same restaurant with a GAFA workshop when I was there in 2009, and back then the place was full of students and professors.

Rooftops

As well as being interested in the consequences of the fence, we also inquired with the restaurant owners about the new rooftops put up prior to the Asian Games. The steel-frame roofs had been paid for by the village authorities and since the house owners did not have to pay they did not refuse the roof being built. The same had happened with paint. The houses on the road had all been painted pale yellow with orange details. Originally all these houses had flat roofs, some of them with access for drying clothes, but most of them were not accessible. This situation had not changed. For many of the houses, the new rooftop space could not be accessed from the house, or if they could, only through a hole in the ceiling. No stairs led to the new top floor. During our inquiry we only found two places where the new rooftop was in use, most places said it was useless.

5.36a   Student village, Nanting Cun, 2009. Author's photographs.

5.36b Rooftop units in Nanting Cun accessed through hole in the ceiling. Author's photographs, 2011.

In one restaurant they said they used the room on the roof to store bottles and other things that could stand the weather as the new rooms were badly made, and not with the purpose of use, but with the purpose of being seen from the surrounding area. This restaurant was run by a family from Hunan who had been in the village for many years. They said they used to earn 4000 to 5000 CNY per day in the good days, and they had several helpers to run the business. After the Asian Games and after the fence was constructed, they had an income of just a few hundred CNY and could only just survive on their earnings. For them the benefit of having an extra free room to store bottles on the roof was of little worth as the fence would lead the clients to another part of the village. They did not believe that the fence would be torn down and their business would improve again. Instead they believed the whole village would be razed, and they believed the fence would be among the last things to disappear.

The second tilted roof in use was a house facing the paddy fields of the village, also behind the fence. We could spot from the street that the walls of the new top floor had been enclosed. In other places the walls were all made of aluminum panels with open air circulating making it look a bit like bee hives, but in this house the walls had black curtains on the inside covering the entire room. Two graduate students from GAFA used the place as a studio. When walking into the house we walked straight into the hall/living/staircase room of the local family living on the ground and first floor. They were eating. We walked up the stairs and on the third floor two students had rented a small room each, paying 300 CNY per month. They rented the rooms because they got the big additional room available outside. They used black cloth on the walls to make the room dark and had arranged a photo studio with a white wall in the back and with big reflectors standing around. They said proudly they had hardly used any money on the redecoration, using things fellow students had left after they finished exhibitions. All materials were

reused and free or cheap. They had divided the space into four departments, one was the studio, one was the kitchen, one was the entrance and storage and one was the living room with a salon. The young man we talked to said they loved drinking tea here with friends. There were empty beer bottles all over. There were several friends using the studio, not only the two living in the rooms. They all studied new media design. As far as he knew this was the only rooftop room in the village used as a studio. He said once the house-owner had seen how much energy they had put into the room, making walls and with carpet on the floor, furniture and kitchen, he wanted to raise the rent and charge another 350 CNY for the extra room they got for free. They had not accepted, saying they would then move out. Although it was a valuable space for them it was cold in winter and too hot in summer, full of mosquitoes and now with a leakage in the roof it was rather difficult to use, and the water had already damaged their curved photo wall. They did not know about the future. They were soon to graduate and probably about to move away. The house owner was about to complete the neighboring house and would move to an apartment there and leave the entire house to rent out for students.

Although in Nanting Cun better constructed than in many other places, with roofs not only for decoration, the roofs are not built well enough for usage other than storage of equipment or activities that can take the weather. While the rooftops could provide additional spatial qualities to the existing houses of the village, that was never the intention when constructed. The authorities wanted it to be a temporary aesthetic project during the Asian Games aiming for the passersby. With the passersby as the main 'clients' and not the affected villagers and residents, the positive effects were limited. Had the village population been the 'clients', I think they could have had much better long-term benefits if the authorities had improved the streets that get very muddy and wet when it rains, or improved other neglected elements in the village. By adding the roofs, it created potential for constructing cheap studios for the art students of the area in these roofscapes, but as seen, this potential was largely unfulfilled.

5.2.7 BEITING CUN

On University Island, next to one of the highways massive concrete column bases, in the north of the village sat lots of old men playing games under some old banyan trees in front of the ancestral temple. The village also had a tall metal fence surrounding it, but the ancestral temple was an open site from the road, which went into the village. It looked more like a traditional village than Nanting, in the sense that there were not so many shops dedicated to students here as of 2011, but there was a massive transformation underway, tearing down old buildings and building new and taller student residents. We

talked to the owner of one construction site plot. He said he sat watching to make sure nothing would fall on the passersby in the main road where the site was located. Eight workers were about to construct the house that day, and it had been under construction for a month, but the entire concrete framework and most of the additional walls were already standing. He expected the whole house to be completed within a couple more months, meaning the entire house would take three months to complete. He had between six and 20 workers dedicated to this project depending on the tasks of the day. He owned several houses in the village and before its completion this house had already been rented out. On the first floor there would be two shops and in the following two floors there would be a hotel for long-term rent by students.

When we passed by there were mostly young men working, but also a woman throwing soil into buckets that were lifted up to the third floor. She was not dressed in work clothes but wore a thin leopard-patterned blouse. After a while she would go and pick up her golden princess rubber shoes and replace them with her boots.

In the village we saw several students walking along the roads and eating in the restaurants, but it was still not a village for students with specific interests, like Nanting Cun had grown to become.

5.2.8 MIGRANT RESIDENCES IN CENTRAL GUANGZHOU; CASE OF ENNING LU AREA

In the old central district of Liwan, west of the former city wall, you come across Enning Lu and its adjoining quarters. The central districts of Guangzhou face the same urban transformation with equal pressure as the urban villages. The transformation is not a *tabula rasa*, but the new developments conducted in the area are of a scale that requires whole quarters of old city fabric to be demolished and replaced by a single new project. In the Enning Lu area there have been rumors and public plans of demolition for years, and some of the local urban residents we talked to said the threat of demolition was their most unpleasant subject of conversation. It made them angry and detached. This constant threat also means many of the old areas are not maintained and stand out as having poorer living conditions year after year. We could see a public announcement hung on a fence in the area indicating which houses are to be demolished. Several houses in the area were empty with sheets nailed in front of the windows. While these areas cannot be regarded as migrant ghettoes as they still have a large local community, they have a growing migrant population, and in some places they outnumber the local population.

We looked at the parallel street north of Enning Lu. It is a pedestrian street with an old stone pavement, the same type one can find in the older parts of Shigangxi and the two places in Shipai mentioned earlier, but here the street is nine stones wide, three times as wide as in Shipai. The old main road in Shigangxi is four stones wide and the remaining roads in Shipai are two or three stones wide. This indicates the difference in urban appearance between the once agrarian villages and the old city.

In the city streets the buildings are of various ages and styles, but most of them not rising more than two to three stories above ground. There are some trees in the streets giving shade and many houses keep flowers in pots in front of their doors, giving the whole area an idyllic, tranquil atmosphere that is very different from the narrow residential streets of the urban villages in the core urban areas. The prices for rent in this street are still cheaper than in the central urban villages such as Shipai.

5.37   Streetscape in Enning Lu area. Author's photographs, 2011.

A furniture factory was located in a house from the '50s with a workshop downstairs and rooms for rent on the second and third floor. The man standing in the open gate was the owner. He was a migrant, who had come to the city four years ago and after working in a furniture workshop for two years he established his own business. He did not live in the street but he said he lived not far away and pointed to the nearby block. He said he moved to the city together with his family. His parents did not want to live in an urban village; they wanted to live in the city center. He had lived and worked in the same area ever since he arrived and he had not considered moving. This area had many similar workshops and they mainly served local clients coming from the neighborhood to get smaller jobs done. He was now about to finish making some furniture for a shop nearby that needed a desk and a shelf.

Walking further down the same street we looked at several old houses with tall wooden doors. They had been wealthy homes once but now were rebuilt with long corridors and additional floors and rooms for rent. People living in these houses came from many provinces.

We had a more thorough look in one of the big old houses. It had a small front-yard. It was also rebuilt to house many more units, but this house was organized in a more intricate way. From the outset, this house was comprised of two tall floors, each with a ceiling height of five meters. The house was thin and long and to get light down to the inner quarters most of the original rooms had light and air shafts going from the ground floor all the way up to small glass 'houses' on the roof. Today some of the apartments on the ground floor have apartments that include these light shafts, and they therefore had odd measurements for the living room: four by four meters and 12 meters tall. It had fantastic spatial qualities and they said it worked fine, cooling in the summer and not too cold in the winter. They managed the acoustics with soft furniture in the lower part of the shaft.

244

5.38a   Old dwelling house. Author's photographs. 2011

5.39b   Plan of old dwelling house. Author'sillustration.

The original owner had left for America in 1949 and after that the government started to rent out several apartments in the house. They had one shared kitchen and two toilets. Later some of the residents had built their own private kitchens and bathrooms in the backyard, a place that had signs of once being a beautiful garden but now it was a cluster of shacks. The first renters were all local urban residents, and the ones with the opportunity to rent the rooms with light shafts had kept their contracts up-to-date. There were several old ladies in their 90s telling me they had lived in the same place for 50 years. We visited one such apartment with a family consisting of one old lady, her son, his wife and their two grown-up children. They had an apartment on the ground floor with two adjoining bedrooms and then they rented an extra room in the second floor for an additional bedroom. In-between these good spacious apartments there were apartments of a very different standard. Private renters had extended their flats with extra floors and made very dark and damp apartments to rent out to migrants, two floors in each original story; two staircases led to the roof and two additional staircases led to the extra floors. On the roof there was a nice space that the local residents sometimes used for barbecues and for drying clothes, but under some roofs and on top of one of the shafts some homeless people had moved in. They slept when I was visiting around noon. They had nothing but a roof, not even walls, and no facilities like water or sanitation. I do not know if they had to pay for sleeping there or not. This house, formerly a one family home, was now the home of more than 20 living units, some of a good standard, some of a poor standard and some of a standard equal to living on the street. It contained a very settled local population together with an ambulant migrant population. The migrants we talked to had lived in their flats for three months and one year respectively, while the local population had spanned generations in the same apartments.

5.3 SHIGANGXI CUN

The case of Shigangxi Cun could have been placed in the previous section to illustrate another path of a village becoming urban. In this respect it is interesting both as an example of one village becoming two and as an example of a village that stronger and stronger face and include the passing road.

I am accounting briefly for Shigangxi Cun in this section as it is the village where both the *House Rent Project* and the *Photo Documentation Project* were launched, and I analyze the material collected from these projects in relation to the spatial situation when reading agency and situatedness in the following two sections.

The village authorities in Shigangxi Cun used parts of its self-development land to establish a new 'village' on the opposite side of the intercity road. While the curved lanes of the old village had slowly changed from a one to two-story house environment to taller buildings of four to seven floors, the new urban village was built with straight alleys and tall buildings of seven to nine levels from the start. Streets were wider, but density was not sacrificed; overall, the new village was both bigger and denser than the old one. It had its own market and its own shops. Migrants living in the new part did not need to visit the old part. Many of the local villagers moved from the old village to the new village, while the majority of the population both in the new and the old village were migrant residents.

5.40   Shigangxi Cun old and new settlement. Author's photographs, 2008, 2010.

5.41   Shigangxi Cun old and new settlement, with Jia Juns first home (1) and *House Rent Projcect* locationes (2, 3, 4). Author's illustration.

While the old village was introvert, with its old main road going through the middle of the village in an east-west direction, the old village had reoriented to meet the activities of the road passing by. New shops and also new commercial buildings were built in the village to position towards the passing road. When seeing the old and new village as one, it was the passing road connecting them, and it therefore developed into the main street of both the old and new village. The traffic is heavy and fast, but the activities of the village on both sides create a crossing flow of pedestrians that turn this part of the urban road into the heart of an urban village.

248

5.3.1 THE MIGRANT WORKERS' DOCUMENTATION CENTER

In 2006 I was teaching a Master's course in architecture and led a group of architect students from Norway (Bergen School of Architecture) and Denmark (Aarhus School of Architecture) to conduct fieldwork study in Guangzhou prior to the start of my PhD. I had seen a list of migrant organizations in Asia and among them we visited two, one of them being the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center. This organization was an initiative started by three local lawyers volunteering with juridical assistance in work-related matters. They paid special attention to work-injured migrants and provided a safe haven for young single migrants arriving in the city. When I first met them in 2006 they had one office in the city center of Panyu and a cultural center located in Shigangxi Cun. They had opened the cultural center in that particular village as it hosted many young migrants working in the electronic industry nearby. They provided language courses, computer classes, dance classes, a Ping-Pong table and a library. People would drop by the center after work and at the weekends and they arranged meetings and excursions. They tried to break down the barrier between the local villagers and the migrant population with a visitation program where young migrants would volunteer to visit and help elderly locals.

First meeting with the village

We were introduced to Shigangxi Cun by the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center and the participants of their cultural center who volunteered to show us how they lived. During our first visit we were very excited by the village appearance. For our alien eyes the village seemingly exposed a traditional village life, with women peeling garlic on their doorstep, washing clothes by the public wells and chatting in the streets. For our untrained ears we could not grasp that the people performing these acts were speaking languages that revealed they were not locals, and many of them were also not villagers. About a third of the population came from Shanxi province for instance, mostly from a bigger town than the village of Shigangxi Cun, and their way of relating to a village of this scale was not that of a continuous traditional habit.

5.3.2   PRELIMINARY STUDY: two kinds of migrant housing

During our four-week stay in the village we looked at the living conditions of the migrant residents, and found there were two distinct types of migrant residences in the village. One type was the old farmers' houses and the other type was rooms or apartments rented in the newer and taller apartment houses of the village. These two types of houses represent the typical traditional village typology and the typical urban village typology. The building activity was massive and local villagers were proud to announce that from 2004 to 2006 Shigangxi Cun had been the village in the area with the largest

transformation rate. About half the buildings of the village had been torn down and rebuilt during those two years.

For the same price as renting a small room with an individual bathroom in the newer apartments of the village, one could rent a whole old farmers' house for several people to share. For some migrants who we talked to, the living conditions were recognized to be worse in the old farmers' houses, as they were typically worn down and rebuilt repeatedly, neglecting local knowledge of natural ventilation and common sense of how to facilitate natural lighting. They had rough surfaces that were difficult to maintain and clean. Still these old houses provide more space per individual for a lower cost, and give more freedom for couples and families who want to share a home instead of splitting up in factory-dormitories or in shared rooms. The old houses are usually rented by family groups or acquaintances from the same hometowns, using the houses for a long-term base in the city, whereas the apartments in the new houses are more commonly rented short-term by young couples or single migrants. The new rooms and apartments are often built with tiles on the floor and with tiled walls in the bathroom. They appear to be cleaner and easier to maintain.

The house owners were usually not interested in improving the old houses, as they looked upon hiring them out as a temporary solution while earning enough money to demolish and build a bigger residential house, with a larger monthly profit. The owners can get more income from renting out a new big house than an old house, so they tend to tear them down and rebuild if they can find the investment and have a plot with a shape and size that can effectively accommodate an apartment house. The old farmers' houses are therefore becoming scarcer in the village and Jiajun said in 2011 that people who managed to get hold of such a house would typically stay in it for much longer than ordinary apartments. Jiajun's family used to live in an old farmer's house in Shigangxi Cun. Her story is accounted for in the *Introduction* chapter and in the discussions on spatial relations chapter. They paid about 250 CNY in 2006 per month for the entire house with nine occupants. We also visited a single young girl living by herself in Shigangxi Cun in 2006. She was paying 250 CNY for one small room with a tiny bathroom, but for her this was value for money as she did not have to walk the narrow alleys in the dark as the house was located by the well-lit city road passing by the village.

5.42 Examples of migrant dwellings in old farmers' house and a new bedsit. Author's photo graphs, 2006, 2011.

5.3.3   PRELIMINARY WORKS IN SHIGANGXI CUN

Back in 2006, to do architectural investigations on possible improvements of typical migrant dwellings we rented one of the old farmhouses in the old part of Shigangxi Cun. We wanted to see how we could improve the old farmer's house with as little effort as possible both regarding cost and time. Also we aimed to improve the living conditions of the migrant residents without raising the value of the house, as we were told this would typically mean the renters were thrown out, the rent raised, and new tenants would be welcomed with a higher rent.

The house

The house we selected was located in a quiet street with only old farmers' houses. Many local villagers still lived in the area. It was near to the main plaza, the ancestral temples and the main inner road of the village. It had water and electricity installed, with a well close by.

The house was a two-story brick building with a roof terrace, but with no courtyard, as it had been included in the built fabric. The house had been standing empty for a long time as no one wished to rent it. This was because it was dirty, dark, damp, hot and full of mosquitoes. It was about 100 years old and hidden behind the extensions it had many spatial qualities. The house contained a large entrance with direct access to the kitchen and to the living room. From the kitchen there was an entrance to a former courtyard, now a roof-covered space with two additional rooms, a toilet and a shower. From the living room one could enter a bedroom and stairs leading up to another bedroom and the roof terrace. It had a good height in the main room, windows giving natural light from all directions, beautiful perforated tile sections in the walls, ornamental carvings on the wooden beams and typical local plaster decorations on the façade. It must have been a well-functioning home in the past. When we became involved, it was a house in decay, with a careless owner who smelled of alcohol.

Our students cleaned the entire house and the ditches outside. We opened the shutters and allowed the air and the light to flow in. We tore down a boiling hot room on the roof, and replaced it with a shadowy balcony with materials we could get for free. Likewise we improved the kitchen, the bathroom and the living room. Much of the improvements were related to removing obstacles rather than adding new elements. We took away the boards covering the windows and repaired the slats in the old venetian blinds.

Implementations in the village

The migrant population of the village did not use many of the places shared by the local villagers. In 2006 several migrants expressed how they could not use the 'common' spaces of the village, as they were not 'common' for all residents, but to be shared by the local villagers exclusively. Only local villagers would gather in and in front of the ancestral temples or under the banyan trees. The migrants we talked to would think of the urban village as a place where they only rented a place to dwell, it was not in their realm to inhabit the village and its common places. The migrants we talked to said they would sit on their doorstep, but they would not necessarily think it was OK for them to sit on a stone bench in the main road, and they were not allowed to use the park. The Migrant Workers' Cultural Center was one of the few places besides their own house where they could 'hang out' without feeling invasive.

Year after year the migrants I talked to expressed how they used the outdoor areas of the village more freely. It was no longer an exclusive domain of the local villagers. When I visited in 2011 I saw no old local people sitting on the benches outside the temples, but Jiajun pointed to one of the benches and said it was one of her favorite spots.

In the surrounding village we observed several urban voids in 2006. They were small plots of former buildings. We were told they would not be replaced with new buildings as they were too small to host a lucrative apartment house, or the person with the use rights was incapable of carrying out a project. We used two of these plots for temporary experiments. We made a neighborhood kitchen and upgraded a rubbish tip to a park using materials we found on the site. This was done in response to the fact that there was nothing like a public space in the village that included the migrant population. Migrants and local villagers helped us, and the head of sanitation in the village put up a sign after we left to say that nobody should throw rubbish in the site. It did not take many years though before the places were back in the state we found them. For the playground/park this happened when the neighboring house was to be demolished and they used the park to heave all the material. Instantly it became a dump again. For the outdoor kitchen we noticed how this plot had been used in a very delicate way as an outdoor kitchen prior to our project as well. That was why the students proposed to improve the kitchen, formerly almost invisible, with only a small stove in a pile of soil. They spent 18 CNY improving the kitchen and the surrounding plot with a tiled stove, a bamboo bench and landscaping with steps and allotment where the neighbors grew vegetables. We noticed immediately that although it had qualities and improved the conditions of the cooking, it became difficult for the migrants to use it, as they felt more

invasive when they used an upgraded space rather than just sitting down in the corner of a vacant plot. Somebody removed the tiled stove and after a while a couple moved in to one of the neighboring houses. They both worked in a vegetable market and as an extra income they would collect plastic waste in the market, bring it home, wash it, dry it and then sell it. They did the cleaning and drying of the plastic all over the plot where several neighbors had previously cooked and grown vegetables.

5.43 Student projects; improving house and public space in Shigangxi Cun. Author's photographs 2006 except black and white photo with courtesy of the students.

5.4 HOUSE RENT PROJECT

5.4.1 HOUSE 1

During our stay in 2006 we used the house for all kinds of events. We invited the local population, the migrant residents, architects and academics from the city to discussions, presentations and social gatherings. The house functioned well for film screenings and parties, and the covered roof terrace was a good place for the students to work.

When the course ended in January 2007 I personally prolonged the rent period, thinking the house could be used as a live-in documentation project throughout my PhD assignment and asked the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center to make it known that migrants could come and live for free in the house if they agreed to contribute with some sort of diary as their tenant contribution. The inhabitants were told to be self-organized and to report back how they got along sharing the house. I wanted to know what rooms they used for what purposes, how they created privacy and in what degree they shared the sphere of home. From summer 2007 I also suggested the inhabitants join the *Photo Documentation Project* to use the life in the house as a backdrop of their photo stories.

The Architect School at South China University of Science and Technology (SCUT) made two additional workshops in the house and in the village, improving the bathroom privacy and opening the roof to re-create the patio. These were student initiated projects, but supervised by professor Bao Geping and a team of young teachers. Equal to the first phase of the work in the village done by Norwegian and Danish students, SCUT also focused on improving the social spaces beyond the house, especially focusing on the migrant children in the village. They collaborated with the kindergarten and made playgrounds and a festival for migrants and local villagers.

In summer 2007 I visited the house and talked with the house owner. He was not pleased with the improvements done by either us or SCUT. He believed we had reduced the safety standard as thieves could now more easily climb onto the roof and from there into the adjacent rooms and he believed the neighbors would start to throw their garbage into the courtyard after the roof-tiles were removed. The migrant residents said this had, however, never been an issue. The inhabitants felt relatively safe in the house and had established good relations with their neighbors.

From the written texts and photos I received from the life in the house I could see how

it was a home of shifting ambience. They shared the house not like a family, but more comparable with how students will share a collective apartment. They had their varied day rhythms, with their work schedules not allowing them to share meals very often. The house had two bedrooms and three bunk beds. From the start the inhabitants arranged one bed in each room, including the living room. For them it was more important to have a room of their own at night, and although one had to enter both bedrooms through the living room, the living room was the most spacious and best ventilated of the rooms, so despite the lack of privacy it was for some the preferred bedroom. On average there were six residents living in the house, with two people sleeping in each room. The inhabitants were a mix of people who had stayed for a long time in the city and people who had just arrived from their hometown. With the exception of one girl who was residing there with her boyfriend, the inhabitants were only young men. From the start they used the living room as their shared living room, but when it became more established as a bedroom they started to use the patio next to the kitchen as their shared living room. This room was the coolest and best ventilated room, but it let rain in. The roof terrace was only used for drying clothes. The architect students had worked on several solutions to improve the privacy and to let each individual get his/her own private space and own place for storage. However, this was not among the inhabitants' priorities. For them the bunk bed was satisfactory as multi-purpose furniture handling both storage and sleeping. Many of the improvements made in the house by the architect students had been reversed by the house owner reintroducing sheets in front of the windows and roof terrace, thus for the inhabitants the heat, humidity and mosquitoes were their recurring issues in the first few years, although later the fear of criminality became their main concern with the house and the neighborhood.
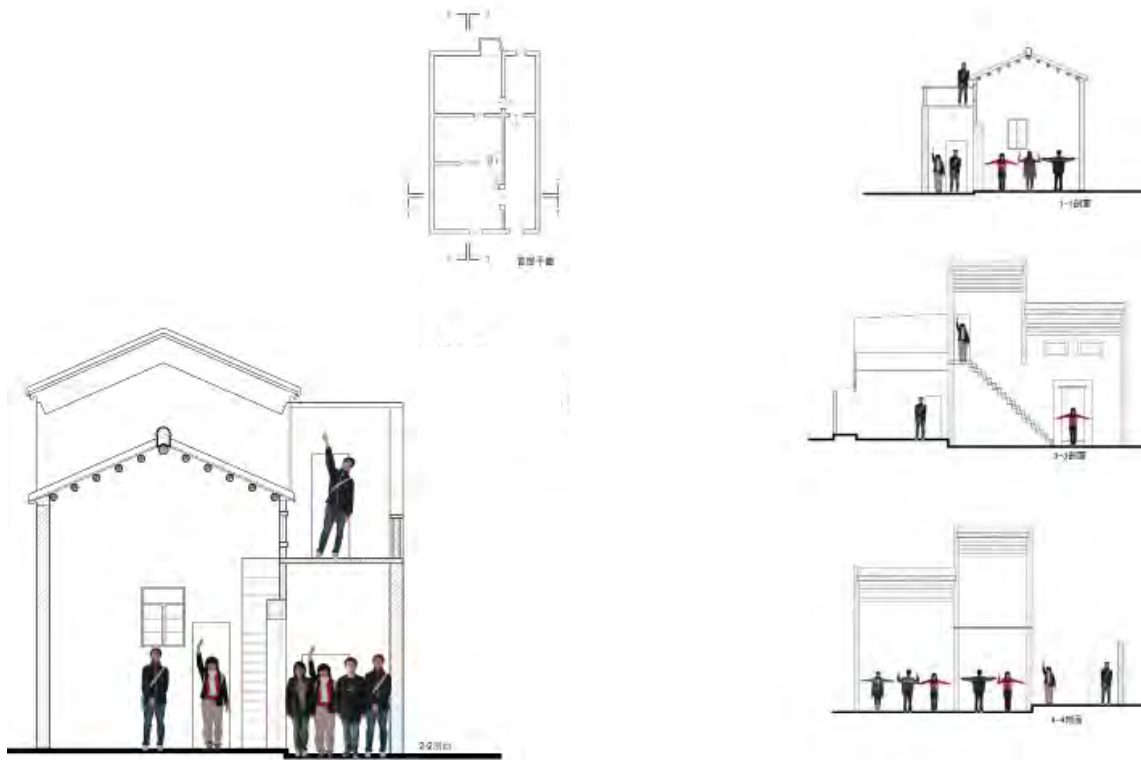
5.44 *House Rent Project*: House 1. Illustrations by students at SCUT, 2006.

5.45 Pictures of everyday life in the house. Courtesy of Ms Chen and author's photographs, 2007, 2008.

Resident stories

Inhabitant from Hubei province: he moved from his hometown in 2002 and settled in Shigangxi Cun when he found work in a lamp factory there. He had lived in the village ever since, twice in the *House Rent Project.* As the first one to move into the house after our involvement, he stayed for more than a year, and later when he was unemployed he lived in the apartment[34] until he moved back to his hometown after the economic crisis in 2008-2009. He told us how he had walked around the village several times looking into windows of empty houses to see where it looked promising to rent. He had walked by this house several times thinking it was not possible to inhabit this house due to its conditions prior to our upgrading. He had been curious when he saw our work and was interested in taking part. He first shared the bedroom upstairs with a friend, but later when a couple moved in, they were given the room and he moved into the living room. The living room was used by all the inhabitants for watching TV and also it was the room where the shared rice cooker and the potable water barrel were located. He used to paint calligraphy in his spare time, and as this gave him time and space for contemplation he said he did not mind that the others in the house would be in his company since he lived in the living room. The living room was big enough to contain several zones; his sleeping zone was in one corner. They had a small table and some stools by the window for eating and chatting and they had a couple of benches for watching TV by the staircase.

The economic crisis at the end of 2008 severely affected the area of Panyu. In this region there are a large of manufacturers of jewelry, toys and electronic devices. Many migrants lost their jobs and there were numerous demonstrations when people noted that the factories had not taken legal responsibility for pensions and insurance for their employees. The individuals were impacted by the economic crisis, but also the ambience of the entire village was affected. The decline was visible with more gambling, drinking, robbery and drug abuse on the streets and in the houses according to the diaries and questionnaires from the *House Rent Project*.

During my visit in late 2008 two of the inhabitants of the rented house had lost their jobs in the financial crisis. One of them invited guests for gambling and drinking and it became a place where all kinds of people started to frequent. The other residents got uncomfortable about living in the house, but because of the free rent situation they felt they had no mandate to throw the others out. They said they were afraid to keep their belongings in their room while they were away, as strangers could come and steal, and

---

34   The apartment: next stage of *House Rent Project*, accounted for later in this section.

twice this happened. The men sleeping in the living room were the ones most affected by the antisocial behavior, as they could not lock their door, or hide their personal things as the gambling took place in the adjoining bedroom.

The other inhabitants could have informed the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center of their problems if they seemed out of hand, but they did not. They carried on and complained to the resident inviting the gamblers on their own, but without the problems being solved. When they explained the situation to me they carefully talked of the resident causing the trouble as the resident with the biggest personal problems due to the economic crisis. They did not like his behavior but they wanted to give him another chance, as they could see his difficult situation.

We were told by one of the inhabitants of the house that the visible sign of everything being out of control was when the entire street where the rented house was located was painted pink one night by a drunkard. Earlier the local villagers would never have accepted this and would have intervened as their pride in the area around the old ancestral temple was strong but they had all given up on the old village. It had become a neglected, noisy and unsafe place. When I asked Jiajun[35] if she knew anything about the color on the wall she smiled and said she believed it was the Chinese architect students' work, but I doubt it, as they ended their work in 2007 and I saw no pink paint during my first visit in November 2008.

5.46   Pink dotted street and cut open iron bar, Shigangxi Cun. Author's photographs 2007

---

35   The girl from the very first story in the *Introduction* chapter.

I visited the house again in November 2011, and then a family of five lived there; a young couple with their eight-month old daughter and her grandparents. They had yellow helmets hanging in the entrance. The old couple said everything was fine about the house except the security situation and the darkness. The house owner had again put sheets on most of the windows and sealed off the patio. Thieves had managed to enter the house and stole their things a few weeks ago. They had cut open the iron bars in the kitchen window and entered that way. The old couple wanted to move back to their hometown as fast as possible and felt unsafe in Shigangxi Cun. They had planned to take the girl and move back when she was about a year old, leaving the young couple to work on construction sites in Shigangxi Cun.

5.4.2 HOUSE RENT PROJECT; HOUSE 2/APARTMENT 1

Jiajun took the initiative of renting an apartment instead of a house, saying she could be the live-in person to organize the functioning of the apartment and hand in information for the research. She refused to live in the old part of the village, although it was the place she had herself spent the last seven years, saying it was no place she wanted to raise her newborn child. There was too much crime and it was more dirty, smelly and noisy than the new areas of the village where she could rent an apartment for nearly the same price as a house in the old part of the village.

I wanted the course of the story to be led by the migrant inhabitants and not by my own sentimental likings for old houses with good spatial qualities, and I thus welcomed this involvement and reaction to the new situation. We agreed that apart from Jiajun and her family who were to stay permanently, the other four inhabitants should be jobless migrants given a free stay during their job-seeking period. This apartment was thus for those who did not or could not go home when they lost their job and who were looking for a new way to sustain their life in the city. Some lived in the apartment for a few weeks, some for several months. Some moved to factory dormitories when they moved out, others moved back to their hometown after having no luck in their job search. For a period in 2009, in addition to the three family members of Jiajun and the four jobless migrants, there was also one man sleeping on the sofa in the living room.

The residents organized the life in this apartment differently from how they had done in the house. They had more shared meals and spent more time talking together in the evenings. The living room became an important shared arena. The child was also a positive factor for the residents, not only for her family, but several of the other residents also expressed how they enjoyed having a child around. One of the residents, a 21-year-

old man who had lived and worked in a factory in Panyu for four years said coming to live in this apartment was the first time he felt at home after he had left his hometown in Hunan because in the apartment he felt the others cared about him.
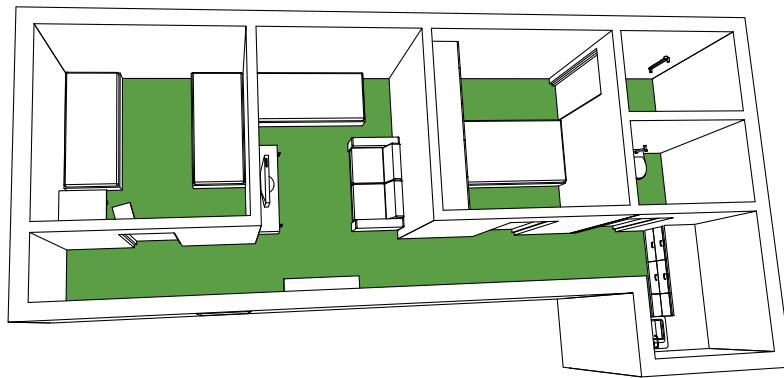
5.47   Photo and plan of House 2/Apartment 1
Photo with courtesy of *Photo Documentation Project*. Plan by author.

In the beginning all feedback I got from the new apartment was good. In general the inhabitants were satisfied with the new neighborhood and explained how this was an area where the local villagers who had escaped the crowded and noisy old part of the village would settle, and also the migrants who settled here were seeking a more ordered life. The inhabitants used the word 'harmonious' to describe this area in comparison to the old part of the village that they had left. However, after a few months a bike was stolen from the entrance and also the inhabitants were not satisfied with the house owner's maintenance of the main gate. In their reports they complained about the local villagers playing mahjong loudly at night on the street outside their house and a very noisy neighbor, while they praised the quiet mornings.

The apartment had all the basics, including a toilet, sink and shower in the bathroom and sink and gas cooker in the kitchen. To share they had a rice cooker, a TV and a radio. They did not have a fridge or a washing machine but they had a balcony to dry their laundry. All the residents living in the apartment had a private mobile phone. What they did not have access to at home they could find around the corner. Mr Li, one of the inhabitants, listed that he had to walk two minutes to find internet, five minutes to the grocery, two minutes to the telephone kiosk and five minutes to the bus stop. His work was half an hour's walk away.

For a period of a few months, two students from Panyu University lived in the apartment as they were conducting a study on migrant mothers' special needs. They responded to the same questionnaires as the average residents of the *House Rent Project*, and for them the time in the apartment seemed an even more positive experience than for the average dwellers not thinking of this as an exotic adventure but a way to cope with life. They came from a regular student dormitory and really enjoyed the atmosphere in the apartment, cooking together and sharing long evenings talking. They also expressed how satisfying it was to live in a shared apartment with a child. The challenge they met was to be efficient and get their work done when there were limitations like no internet in the apartment and only one computer. They complained about the uncertain water and electricity supply, and so did some of the other residents.

5.4.3   HOUSE RENT PROJECT; HOUSE 3/APARTMENT 2

When the house owner raised the rent it made Jiajun decide it was not worth the price anymore and they started to look for another apartment. They found one in the old part of the village. This was a small apartment on the ground floor with a balcony room. They hesitated to move back to this part of the village, and told of several violent incidents they had heard of that had occurred in the area. I told them I could pay for the raised rent of the previous apartment, but Jiajun said they did not want to pay for something they did not think was worth the price[36]. The apartment was pre-paid for a whole year and when this period expired they moved to the new apartment in the old village, again pre-paying for a whole year. The apartment they moved into had been completed one year before. It was located in a quiet back street near the ancestral temples in the central part of the village, close to the former house we rented. I will elaborate Jiajun's relation to this apartment and neighborhood in the *Discussion* chapter.

---

36   For most of the hiring period I have paid the rent with personal funding and for the last couple of years with funding I earned for this purpose and put in my project funding.
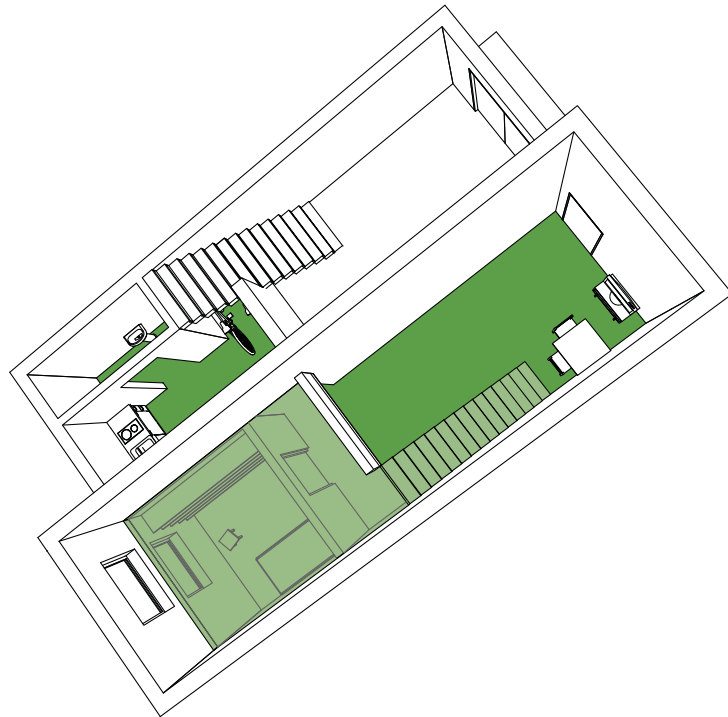
5.48   Photos and plan of House 3/Apartment 2. Plan by author.

5.5 PHOTO DOCUMENTATION PROJECT
5.5.1   ON NARRATING SUBJECTIVE MIGRANT STORIES

The Chinese photographer Zhang Xinmin did a photo series called '*Encircling the cities-long travel of the Chinese farmers in the cities*', involving a long-term investigation, taking pictures of the rural-urban population in their hometowns, on their travels and in the cities from 1984 to 2000. It is a remarkable collection of impressions that shows the migrants' relation to urban transformation as individuals with subjective experiences and urban preferences[37].

The Chinese artist Cao Fei did a project called '*What are you doing here?*' in 2005 and 2006, collaborating with the workers at Siemens' light bulb factory in Foshan, the neighboring city to Guangzhou. The project was included in the annual international Siemens art program. Cao Fei worked with the migrant workers in their spare time for half a year, developing their own expressions, looking at themes the participants had found significant during conversations with the artist: '*hometown*', '*reality*', '*dream*', '*future*', and '*vision*'. The whole work was staged in a big performance in the factory premises called '*The theatre of life*'.

I visited the factory in 2006 and talked with the workers who joined the project to get their own perspective of their contribution. They expressed how they thought of this as 'their' project, and not the artist's project. They had been heard and encouraged to develop their own interpretations and expressions, using personal skills and developing new skills according to their own judgment or necessity. One woman performed a peacock dance in the stock hall she had learnt in her hometown while a man did breakdancing in the assembly hall. The project got international recognition and was displayed in several art exhibitions in Australia, USA, Asia and Europe. The participating migrant workers expressed how they were proud of their own contributions and of their stories of longing, frustration and coping being given attention beyond the dormitory. They asked me "What do you do when you feel homesick?", and they had elaborated their own answers to this through their work. The photo series from the project is called '*Whose utopia?*'

---

37   Also presented as 'Country to city' and 'Laying siege to the city'. To see his pictures see for instance: China in Pictures 1949-2009; Zhang Xinmin contribution: 'Laying siege to the city' 1984-1998. Available at: http://www.china.org.cn/pictures/chinadocphotos/2009-06/04/content_17888152.htm

5.49   *My future is not a dream 02* and *My future is not a dream 03* in *Whose Utopia?*
by Cao Fei, 2006. With courtesy of the artist.

In this project, but also in plain photography, Cao Fei works with roles in an interesting way as seen in her picture *'A mirage'* for instance, mentioned further in the *Context* chapter. Artists like Cao Fei give both the photographer, the photographed and the photograph a new role when they involve and engage the participants and investigate what happens in front of the camera, and as a result they challenge the 'picture' of the society.

Comparative politics researcher Diana Fu asks how Chinese female migrants can come to possess and not only produce their voice, and she sees potential in the theatre-workshop given at 'the Home'[38], where the participants have found/created the freedom to express themselves by "breaking the normative script [...] disrupting the continuity of performances [...] beginning to speak their own desires and to wrestle with their role in China's modernization" (Fu 2009, p. 556), "...through creating and practicing multiple ways of responding to exploitation" (ibid, p. 557). Tamara Jacka writes about this as creating a "subaltern counter-public" (Jacka 2006), in a space where migrant women "assemble and perform oppositional interpretations of their identities and interests", in contrast to merely reproducing the hierarchies of dominant discourse (Jacka 2006).

I was inspired by these approaches when I set up the *Photo Documentation Project* and

---

38   The 'Home' is a migrant center for migrant women, focusing on strengthening their identity as dagongmei, formerly mentioned in the *Introduction* chapter on migrant definitions.

used their contributions as a basis to reflect upon. They stress the importance in the concept of equality, when all stakeholders are interacting as participants. Fu shows the threat of the "double-edged nature of the Home" in that it both empowers and restricts the articulation of the migrant women, pointing to the identity production of *dagongmei* and the positive aspects in their theatre workshop. These examples enlighten how the participants' situation can be narrated in a different context and with different orders. Fu (2009) stresses how this narration is not limited to the five W's (who, what, when, where, why) but can also be seen in accordance with their verbal communication and fragmented patterns of thought in *'dabaihua'* (plain talk) and she shows how "...the dynamics of language that influence their speech include urban versus rural, formal versus informal, Mandarin versus local dialect" (Fu 2009, p. 545).

5.5.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF PHOTO DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

"Do you see what I mean?"

In summer 2007, I bought the first cameras, memory cards, rechargeable batteries and a computer and engaged the local Migrant Workers' Documentation Center to take part in the *Photo Documentation Project*. At that time the organization had a cultural center located in the urban village of Shigangxi Cun. In this center they arranged computer courses, language courses, provided a small library and rooms for social activities like dance classes, Ping-Pong and karaoke. Many of the migrants who frequented this place volunteered to take part in the *Photo Documentation Project*. From the start there was an open invitation welcoming all migrants to get involved, with no demand for prolonged attendance. We met one Sunday a month to show and discuss the pictures and to hand over the cameras to the next volunteer. Many just came to listen to the stories and see the pictures taken by others without contributing with pictures themselves.

I asked the participants to take pictures of their daily life, their home and their neighborhood. Building on Deleuze and Guattari (1980), these pictures not only address how they perceive their surroundings, but it is of equal importance to me how the pictures can be read as a "negotiation of their immediate vicinity" through their own access to the situation. Some of the participants live in the urban villages while others live in factory dormitories. Some of them are young single girls, others are couples and families with children, thus the pictures have a broad focus, but seen together they are a visual report, looking at spatial coherence. The participants position themselves through their agency and through their reflections. It is therefore interesting to look at how they visualize both; their agency and their reflection.

266

5.50   Agency and reflection. *Photo Documentation Project.*

When the Chinese media describe the migrants it is very common to picture them on their travels coming to or leaving the city in hordes. The train station in Guangzhou has in many ways been the indicator of how many migrants China has, as they are so visible when waiting for a train to take them home to celebrate Chinese New Year, a mass-movement that is compared to that of the pilgrimage to Mecca. This is one of the few images we as strangers have of the Chinese migrants, except of the images we have seen from building sites and assembly lines, where the migrants usually operate in teams and again figure as a crowd and not as individuals. In these pictures the migrants either represent a worker or someone on the move. The pictures from the *Photo Documentation Project* focus much more on the personal meeting with the city, the urban village, with the road ahead and the changed relation to the hometown left behind. I will throughout the following section elaborate how it depicts various relations to home, family and belonging.

5.5.3   PHOTO AUTHORIZATION

Initially I had planned for the project to run with only the participating migrants and a research assistant collecting the pictures and the comments during monthly sessions. I did not want the preferences of aesthetics in photography to guide the way the participants came to interpret their situation through the images. I wanted the participants to develop their own visual preferences, not restricted by preferences of the visual language of professional photographers. The participants were not asked to compete with professional photographers on their terms, but rather to focus on their own subjective angle of approach. However, from the start the participants were interested in how they could learn more about photography. They wanted to be skilled, and in a way authorize their voice through professionalization and supervision. They had very little spare time and they did not want to throw it away on experimenting on their own. They wanted to learn more about how to grasp what they saw as reality through photos, and in their eyes that required knowledge. It was not enough for them that someone with average camera skills showed them the functions of the camera, they wanted to talk about photography.

We first had a meeting with a famous and influential Chinese photographer. He had a broad focus in his own work, and like Zhang Xinmin he had also taken pictures of migrants. He was interested in joining the project but wanted the participants to get started on their own first. He then wanted to guide them with their own pictures as the topic in question, not letting his preferences lead the participants' approach. He was a busy man and meeting after meeting he could not attend, so we had to find a new solution. Many of the participants had never used a camera before and they hesitated to start on their own. We had three monthly sessions before we engaged Ping Shen, a professional Chinese photographer who would attend all meetings. He started by showing them the functions of the camera and talked of basic knowledge like zooming, reflection and so on. He had experience in both editorial photography, photojournalism and fashion photography. In the meetings he drew on the participants' initiatives and answered their questions as well as going into detail about different topics depending on their ongoing focus. The person who has taken the pictures was responsible for presenting them to the group, and this person would lead the discussion which in turn would lead to the feedback from the audience and from the photographer. The photographer was not supposed to direct them into a certain expressive language, but help them to express what they want through the images and show them how their flaws could be avoided. They had sessions looking at how to photograph through translucent surfaces like glass, how to photograph old photos, how to photograph in motion and how to work with light

and shadow. They also arranged portrait sessions and joint photo shootings outside to talk of the possibilities and difficulties in situ.

Once we arranged for a delegation of participants to visit Lianzhou International Photography Festival. There they saw pictures taken by professional photographers interpreting the role of the migrants in the new modern urban era of China. They viewed the works of Zhang Xinmin, the photographer mentioned at the beginning of this section. He and other Chinese photographers have gone beyond the surface to show how the individuals cope with their life as migrants, but they remain pictures taken by an outsider, and not by migrants themselves. Our participants documented and discussed many of the exhibitions they saw and talked of the possibilities of narration in photography with the other participants once back in the center. After this they started to express their understanding of the reasons for them to present their own interpretation of migrant reality through images. While some of the participants mainly shared pictures of excursions and impressive sites in the initial phase of the project, the participants' images got a stronger voice throughout. I think their view can be compared with that of the artist and philosopher Peter Friedl when he writes about pictures that want to be read as an alternative understanding of reality. He calls this an attempt at "pictorial justice" (Friedl 2006). Through their own pictures they see a different form of representation, one that is plural in its expression, one that focuses on how they manage, how they maneuver, how they get by day after day. Since these are also not a collection of singular pictures portraying a group of migrants, but instead contain prolonged stories that follow the shifting life of individuals, it provides a very different focus than what has until now been exhibited concerning Chinese migrant reality.

"You need a purpose to express yourself, but that expression is its own purpose"

This sentence was the first sentence on the blog of the Chinese artist Ai Weiwei (Obrist 2011, p. 46). For the migrant participants of the *Photo Documentation Project* the purpose of expression has been developed throughout the project. To the participants, both the purpose of selecting a relevant focus for the photo-story and the purpose of sharing and discussing the pictures and its content in the sessions have been equally important. For me documenting the pictures, the considerations of the photo taker and the discussions that arose among the participants have all been relevant. The participants very actively comment on each other's ways of representing themselves through symbols that are often difficult for us to detect, like for instance showing a photo from their hometown with a tall village wall, indicating that this is a prosperous village. Much more subtle

269

expressions of love for their family or loss of identity were also expressed through their images and stories, and thus raised as discussions in the sessions.

5.51   Subtle expressions of self representation by one participant. Photo Documentation Project.

Gillian Rose has in her book '*Visual Methodologies: An introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*' (2001) divided the sites that construct the meaning of a visual image in three "the site of production, the site of the image itself, and the site of its audience. That is, how an image is made, what it looks like, and how it is seen are the three crucial ways in which a visual image becomes culturally meaningful" (Rose 2001, p. 188). She states that each of these three sites can be viewed in three different modalities, namely technological, compositional and social. The participants in the *Photo Documentation Project* consider all of these aspects in their photo stories as argued in the previous

270

paragraph and shown throughout this chapter. The sites are important in their meaning and production, while they individually put a very different focus on the three modalities; some work with technological aspects, finding inspiration in the possibilities of the camera while others work with composition. Most of them, however, emphasize the social modality of the image, and see the three sites of meaning mostly in relation to this. They photograph the sessions and they photograph the photographer and the photographed.

5.52   Considering meaning in images. *Photo Documenation Project.*
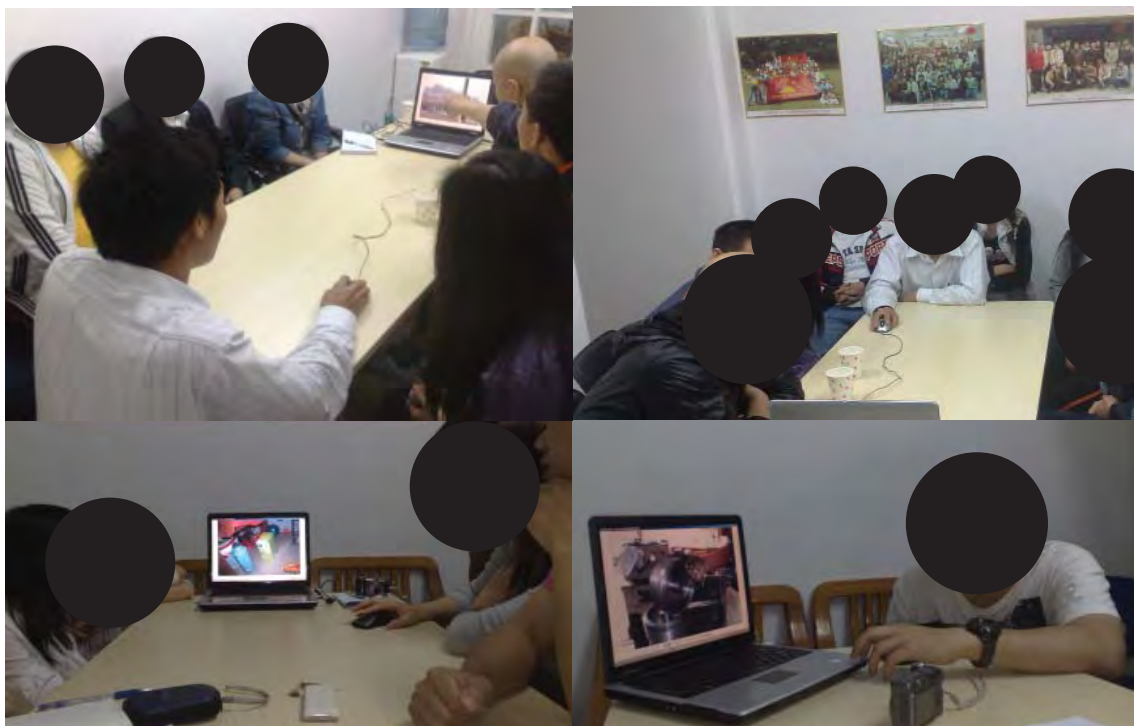
The participants had very different approaches and filters in their stories. Some of them showed pictures that you could expect to be very similar to a selection they would show their parents to tell them not to worry, and how well life was in the city, while other participants used the photos to reveal aggravating circumstances in their job or accommodation situation. Some presented pictures that were molded on typical tourist documenting, posing in front of monuments in parks or beside furniture in their dwelling, while others made contributions that tried to catch a glimpse of the ongoing activity without disturbing the actual action with their camera interfering, showing how meals were made, teeth brushed and hours spent.
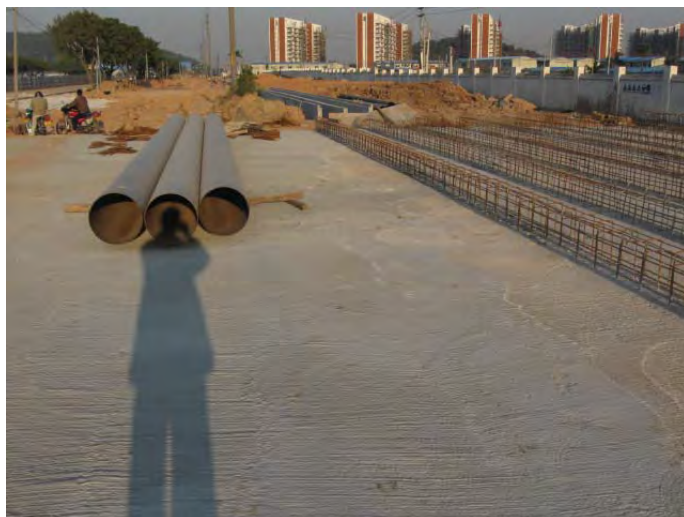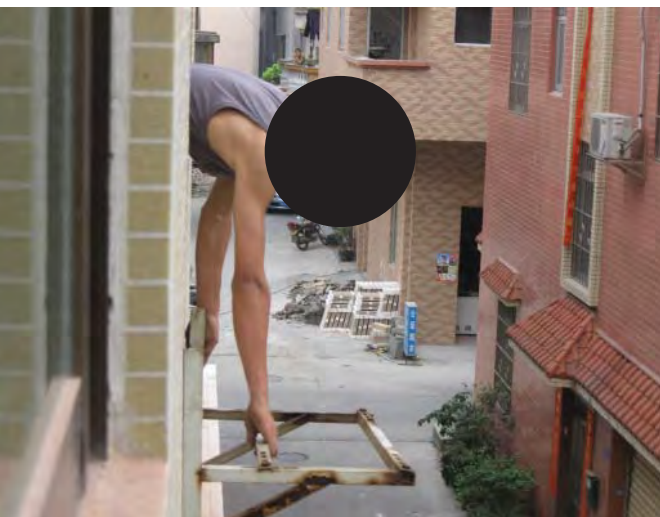
5.53 Story approach. *Photo Documentation Project.*

Through their pictures the participants also documented the spatial transformation of the urban village and the city, as they live in the middle of these urban dynamic processes. The pictures reflect what role the migrants take in the transformation of the urban ambience. We can see how old buildings are demolished, materials for reuse taken care of, construction sites with elders performing a ceremony before starting a new construction, and then the completing of yet another house with apartments in the urban village. These processes are documented both from the neighboring point of view, looking at the surroundings from one's window and from the sites themselves, with the migrants being part of the working team.

5.54a Ongoing urban transformation. *Photo Documentation Project.*
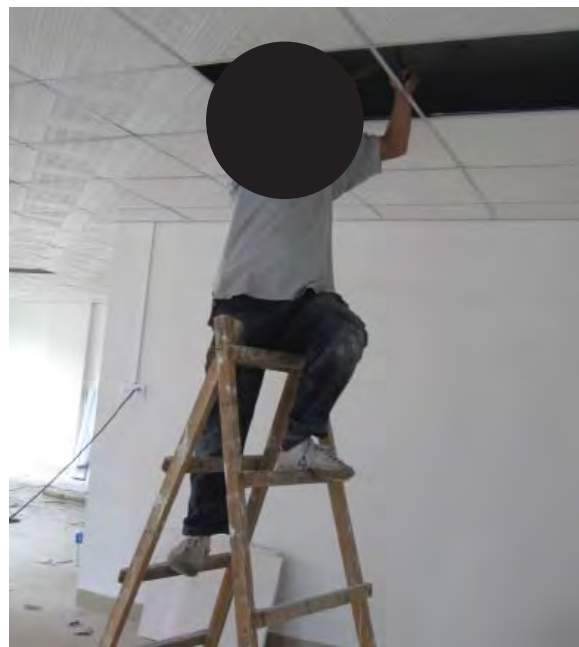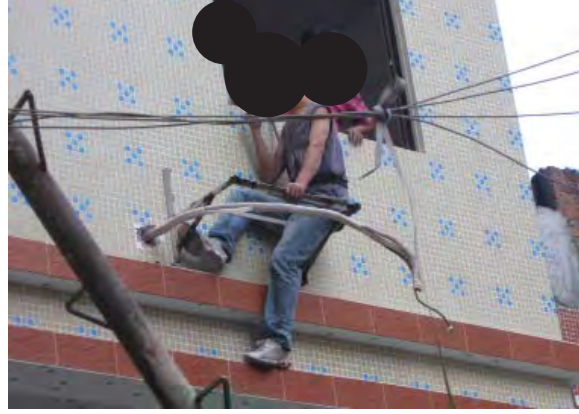
5.5.4 PHOTO STORIES

The participants borrowed a digital camera with a memory card that can store several hundred pictures. They would usually keep the camera for a month, and the photo stories they presented afterwards often contained several different locations and focuses. In their visual contributions, some are vague, and some more precise in their expression of reflection in regard to defining an agenda for their work. Often they aimed for a specific story when they borrowed the camera, but since they had the camera with them for a long time, they also included other impressions that they came across along the way. They might show pictures from their home in the city and their hometown in the same photo story. Some of them contributed with photo stories many times, while others only used the camera once. Some of them staged themselves in the pictures, while others are always behind the camera showing us what they see.

When I have looked at the pictures included in the *Photo Documentation Project* in regard to situatedness and agency I have discovered four main categories of sites in the pictures. Most contributors have taken pictures that cover several of the categories.

<u>The first category</u> of pictures shows their hometown. These are pictures that give an impression of the hometown, and its surrounding landscape, but also zooming in on the house of the family, with certain objects like the stove, the courtyard, fruit trees and furniture. The main door or gate is often depicted. Also pictures of family members or friends are always present in this type of picture collection. Within this, they are of two types; arranged photos with the persons looking into the camera, and pictures of the family members while active, such as cooking, eating, talking or cleaning. Very often they show the journey from the city to the remote village in pictures of the road ahead, the first glimpse of the village on the horizon, then the open gate and the big welcoming smiles.

5.54b   Ongoing urban transformation. *Photo Documentation Project.*

275

5.55a Journey-hometown. *Photo Documentation Project.*

5.55b Journey-hometown. *Photo Documentation Project.*

When these pictures are presented to the group it is with a lot of emotion from both the presenter and the listeners. The other participants recognize similarities from their own hometowns and read meaning from the pictures that are not there for the unfamiliar eyes to spot. They talk of crops and tools, meals and tastes, buildings and landscapes, habits and traditions. They talk of the family left behind and they talk of ways for the local community to manage the strains when the workforce leaves, how their grandmother takes care of the field or what kind of help their children are offering.

Most of the participants would use the opportunity to take the camera when travelling 'home', as they expressed that sharing these views with their fellow '*Gongyou*' or co-workers in the city was important for them in bridging the relations with their hometown and the new people they had met in the city. In the *House Rent Project* contributions from several of the residents mentioned that apart from calling their family, what worked best when they felt homesick was to talk about their hometown and family with their friends in the city. Some would also use the opportunity when home with a camera to document old pictures from their childhood or old family photos.

As written in the introduction to this section, these pictures are not of the hordes, but display the subjective, personal meeting with the road ahead and the family left behind. It depicts a journey of contemplation within a grand landscape.

The second category of pictures shows their dwelling in the urban village in the city. This is sometimes separated from pictures of the surroundings, only focusing on the life indoors, but sometimes the story also contains pictures of the life in the urban village, or different activities in the surrounding city. These pictures tend to give a very close and intimate perspective. They portray the textile that wraps the bunk bed, the piggy bank on the TV and the posters on the wall. They show the subjective/personal layer of objects added to the dwelling that are usually pre-furnished with beds and furniture. These are often introverted pictures. Also this group of pictures shows how they live and share meals and fun with their friends and roommates. The pictures present how they cope with the heat by eating on the cold tile floor and how their bed becomes their personal sphere where they place books and other private belongings that they want to be surrounded with.

5.56 Migrant dwelling in urban village. *Photo Documentation Project.*

In her contribution to the *Photo Documentation Project,* Ms Bie describes her own surroundings pointing to individual concerns and shows how identities come into being with small means. Through her pictures she shows pride for her work and her workplace, but also for her own sphere around the bed. Through her images of the qualities of the textiles she surrounds herself with, in work and in privacy, she points to the difference in the ambience of work and home. The patterned textiles she has added to her personal surroundings have an intimate character and remind her of a domain different from a factory. She talks of how these are for her elements of home, childhood, grandparents and the garden. The way she has depicted her roommates in the photos reminds me of the way other participants have presented their family members in their hometown; casual and friendly poses done as a break in the daily life. Ms Bie presents a situation of coping and managing within frames of an ordered environment. There are also many other contributions portraying a life in the urban village that seems ordered and comfortable, highlighting their interests and capabilities. They take photos of their wardrobe, how they repair shoes or their own poems written in calligraphy, hanging on the wall.
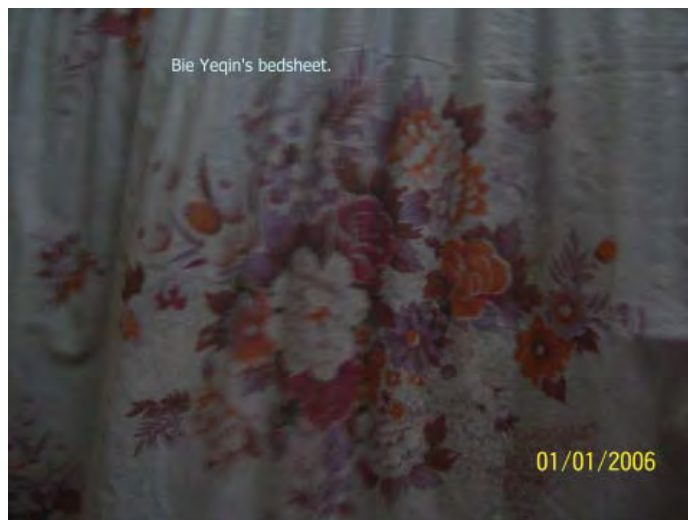
5.57 Ms Bie's dwelling in the city. *Photo Documentation Project.*
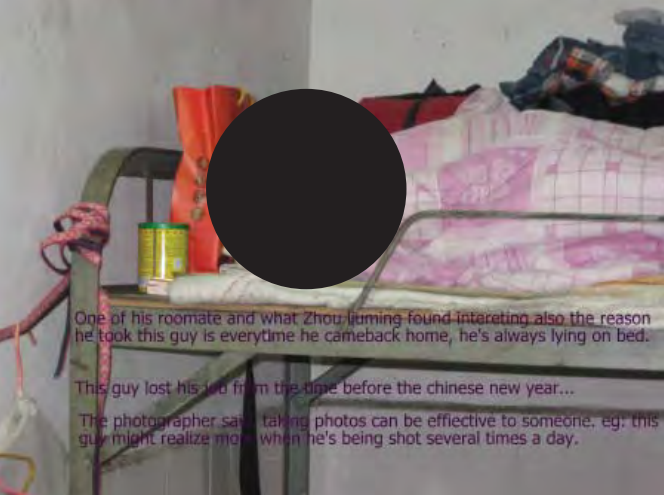
One of his roomate and what Zhou Liuming found intereting also the reason he took this guy is everytime he cameback home, he's always lying on bed.

This guy lost his job from the time before the chinese new year...

The photographer said, taking photos can be effiective to someone. eg: this guy might realize more when he's being shot several times a day.

Zhou Liuming's flat.
The photographer said he was impressed by the flashing mirror and the knife.

a bit scary when seeing the shining knife...

THis is the boss of the workshop

Zhou Liuming's workshop and his workmate. He took this yawning guy by accident.

Everyone laughed when they saw this picture. :)

5.58　　Four boys working and living in an urban village. *Photo Documentation Project.*

Other contributions of the participants' work and dwelling environments clearly reveal their vulnerability and hopeless situation, like in the photo story of the four boys sharing an old apartment in an urban village. One of them had lost his job in the aftermath of the economic crisis and in his hopelessness he did not leave the bed. The others drank and left the dirty dishes in the sink, as described through the images. Dark, dirty and messy, they seem to inhabit the metal workshop where they work and the apartment where they reside in the same manner. This is not an exception within the project. There are many photo-stories portraying life in crammed and dirty factories where the workers sleep under the tables surrounded with endless heaps of unfinished textile products or showing pictures of dormitories and bedrooms that seem invaded by misery. Still, in most of these stories there are also examples of how they celebrated their birthday with cake or small hints of dreams and beginnings of a better future. They show pictures of what they bought with their earnings, investments in a machine they will take to their hometown for future earnings or the moon seen through their bedroom window.

The third category of pictures puts the attention on the situation of the migrants, documenting laws and regulations, but also faults in the enforcement of behavior within their work environment and in their relation to society. These are pictures that show sheets of stamped papers proving illegal overtime or salaries below the minimum wage. These pictures also document the work situation on the shop floor, in the offices, in their breaks and spare time. They show how they go to the acre next to the factory to pick vegetables in their break. How they all send messages on their mobiles before the work day starts or how their shared meals and breaks in the factory are organized. They take pictures of the details they are in charge of producing like back-pockets of trousers and details on the shirt sleeves.

Some of the participants took the camera to document their work place for similar reasons as taking the camera to their hometown. Since most of these work places are restricted areas, they would not be able to share their work environment with friends not working in the same company, and therefore it was interesting for the participants to get a glimpse into the others' daily lives in their respective work places. They would bring pictures of smiling colleagues and bosses and they would bring pictures of dormitories, assembly halls and dining rooms. In the sessions they would discuss their situations in detail using these pictures as reference.

5.59   Workplace. *Photo Documentation Project.*

Others would deliberately focus on the working conditions, bringing the camera to document how the workplace broke the regulations. They would show the dining room, but also zoom into the table and the amount of food that was supposed to be shared by eight people, showing how they never got enough or they would bring a series of safety posters in construction sites along with pictures of workers performing dangerous tasks.

The fourth category of pictures shows the participants in their urban surroundings and on excursions and days off work. Here we see how the participants take part in shaping the ambience of their surroundings through their many agencies as a group and as individuals. They have documented activities they take part in as workers in a company or as members of the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center; attending courses, performing dances in official programs or going on cultural excursions. Many have also included individual stories of places they visit and observations they have made in relation to their urban surroundings. There are many pictures of river scenery and the impressive city. They show neighboring migrants in their job situation, demolishing houses or completing new housing in the urban village. They show local villagers performing ceremonies before a new construction site. They show how they use the new park by the metro and they show how they take part in important events for the city, such as the Asian Games. These are stories just as much about the city and the urban village as they are stories about themselves. These are also pictures that for them are important when sharing impressions about the life in the city with their family in their hometowns.

5.60 On the city. *Photo Documetnation Project.*

5.61 Mr Wang's stories. *Photo Documentation Project.*

Mr Wang's photo contributions show how belonging is something that can bridge the different local scales. He lost a hand in a work accident, and in the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008 he was unable to find a job in the city and eventually moved back home. Before that, in one of his photo stories he presented how the other work-injured migrants returning to his hometown managed to establish a livelihood in the countryside on their own. Most migrants from this village had ended up in the same business in the city and unfortunately this was a business that cost many workers their limbs, and with no ability to carry on their work and with no compensation, they were forced back to the village. With the impulse and knowledge they had gained while in the city, Mr Wang told of how they managed to create a new beginning for themselves when returning to the hometown. Mr Wang documented every work-injured person in the village including pictures showing what kind of life they had back in the village. One had brought board games from the city and earned a living with his games café. Most of them had joined in building up a mushroom factory.

Mr Wang spent 12 years in the city. He moved back to his wife and daughter and joined the mushroom factory when he lost his job. For him, leaving the city was not a defeat. It was something he expressed how he had longed for more and more throughout the years. He said although he might move back to the prospects of forever being a poor peasant, he did it with confidence that his many orientations gained latitude from a background both in the countryside and in the city. He had liked living in the city but it was with pride he showed how his fellow work-injured villagers had managed back in the hometown. His pictures were not that of an uprooted person, as the many different places he related to created an intertwined context.

Although I have presented the pictures from the *Photo Documentation Project* here as four categories, when read in regard to home and belonging I have already mentioned that the participants include all categories in their stories and often present pictures and photo stories that trespass these sites, showing things that remind them of their hometown in the city or urban transformation and modernization they find in the countryside. Mr Wang's stories are a clear example of this. When he showed a photo story of traditional agrarian tools he saw in a museum in the city, he showed them out of context, but presenting them in context, when describing how his relatives still used the tools actively in the fields, his picture stories operate across borders.

I have throughout the process communicated with the participants about their pictures and about my reading of the pictures and for some of them the categories mentioned

here were not so important; they would rather emphasize the timeframe and how the countryside and the urban environment they relate to changes and how this is reflected in the participants' changed practice over time and in diverse locations. Also, for many of them the most important element is that the images present their story the way they have angled it. It presents them as individuals with subjective interests and agencies within the urban ambience. They are therefore curious to hear how their stories are perceived and want to contribute when the pictures are to be presented in other arenas. Through their plural backgrounds they describe a more nuanced picture of migrant agency and the many subjective ways they use to situate themselves within the city. The elaboration on this is placed in the *Discussion* chapter.

5.5.5 MIGRANT MOTHER FOCUS

After the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center had to close down their cultural center in Shigangxi Cun, they first moved some of the activities from the center to their office, but their office then had to move several times to answer the demands of the local authorities who feared the many demonstrations among the migrants after the economic crisis in 2008. The organization moved the office from the city center of Panyu to an apartment in a suburban area, first close by Shigangxi, but later they moved again two bus stops away from Shigangxi Cun. They had to stop all activities related to the cultural center and only provided legal assistance to migrants with work-related disputes. It then became more difficult to attract new participants to the *Photo Documentation Project*. The ones joining the project moved away one by one, as they had done throughout the process, but previously they were replaced by new members, but as the organization was not visible among the regular migrants anymore, we had to rely on word of mouth from the participants.

The organization, although facing practical difficulties, still worked on new projects and one of the ideas they focused on was a migrant mother perspective. Due to the *hukou* legislation previously discussed, many migrant women would travel to their hometown to give birth. We talked to some migrants who said the birth itself was ten times more expensive if they chose to have the baby delivered in the city compared to in their hometown. After birth it would be difficult to take care of the baby in the city if both parents had to work, as working days are long and usually not flexible if employed. Later, kindergarten and school are huge economic burdens for the migrants residing in the city as mentioned in the introduction chapter. Leaving their children in their hometown while working in the city creates a mental strain that is difficult to cope with emotionally for both the children and the parents. Saunders (2010) talks of a generation of Chinese

children growing up in the countryside with their grandparents. They hardly know their parents who are working in the city, and when their only stable contact, their grandparents, either get ill or die the loss and despair is a hard thing for a small child to cope with. The organization said they had noticed how more and more migrants chose to bring their children with them to the city, because they have no relatives that can take care of their children in the hometown, because they want to raise their children themselves, or because they think growing up in the city gives better future prospects for the child. In one meeting I had with a group of migrant parents working on an idea to start up a migrant kindergarten, they said they had thought of 'camouflaging' the kindergarten as a children's library, as this would be easier to get permission for from the government.

To strengthen the focus on the situation of the migrant families, the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center suggested that we narrow the focus of the *Photo Documentation Project* to that of 'migrant mothers'. To introduce the new participants to the project I sent them this presentation (see illustration on next page) that was translated and shown in the following meeting. However, the change in focus was not so abrupt, with many of the former members still wanting to join and only a few new mothers joining. In 2010 the organization had two new projects; already started was a joint effort with a Beijing-based migrant organization[39] starting up in Guangzhou, providing tutorial help for migrant children in an urban village. They were also about to start a migrant mother center on their own in another urban village. We discussed the possibilities for the documentation project to be included in the latter center. We looked into the possibility of whether we could compensate the migrant women who shared with us their valuable time and their photo stories, with sessions that included a good quality childcare program, preferably in the migrant mother center. We thought that by contributing to such an initiative we could get our stories, and the facilities we backed could be used by others throughout the week. The center now has funding from abroad and is starting up in 2012 and I am proceeding with the collaboration with the *Photo Documentation Project* beyond my PhD period.

---

39   Also responsible for the 'Home' previously mentioned in the *Introduction* chapter

5.62 On the Migrant mother communication. First input to participants by author, originally part of a powerpoint presentation. The text is mainly extracted from Stones (2007). Picture 1 and 2 with courtsy of Library of Congress. Last picture; retouched by, and with courtesy of Michael Stones.
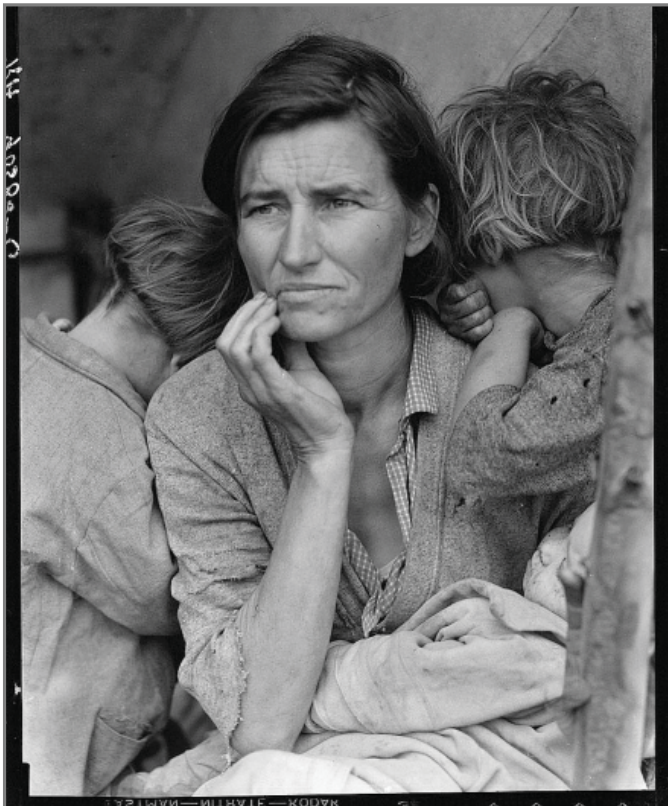
MIGRANT MOTHER

This picture taken by Dorothea Lange (a female photographer) in 1936 is maybe the most famous picture of a migrant mother in the world.

It is called: "Migrant mother", but its real name is:
"Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California"

In 1936 there was a big economical depression in the US and this picture is said to represent the ultimate photo of this depression era. Also it is said to represent one of the best examples of humanistic documentary genre.

What story does it tell?

How would the story be different if it was told by the mother herself?

What do YOU see?
It is no doubt a strong photo emotionally, but is this a picture of a strong woman or a defeated woman? The children; are they just shy or are they turning around, using their mothers back for comfort, revealing how they cry? As a composition this is a strong picture because the two childrens backside heads furhter strenghtens the focus on the mothers face and expression. She is in a way the facial expression of all the three- of the entity of the family. But is this the expression that captures the mood of the family?

To me this is a strong photo because the womans expression is so focused. With the active arm leading to her face. Aware of the photographer, but not looking into the camera, filled with her own thoughts. I have not before known what story it represented. Or what story it pretended to represent. Michael Stones (2007) explains:

'The mission given to the photographer, Dorothea Lange by her boss Roy Emerson Stryker was to take pictures that would support the New Deal agenda of the Resettlement Administration's documentary project. This agenda aimed to improve conditions for poor farmers and sharecroppers brought to poverty by the economic Depression. Stryker believed in scripting his photographers to capture in pictures the human side of pressing social and economic concerns of the day' (Stones 2007).

Lange sent the photos to her employer, prompting a quick response by federal bureaucrats who rushed food supplies to pea-picker camps in the area... This picture made a change for many, but not for the mother and her children, as they left the camp and drove further to find job at a cabbage farm.

This one picture became very famous, but it was only 1 of 5 that Dorothea took that day. 'With one exception, the Migrant Mother series seems to accord with the mandate from her employer. The clothing, faces, and postures is said to depict the mother and children as ragged, broke, uneasy, resigned', while

Stones (2007) write how her posture 'shows a delicacy of manner'. There is one very different picture in this series, number 4. 'The older children are absent from [this picture], which is of the mother feeding her baby. She has a straighter posture than in the other photos, with her head bowed slightly downward and toward the tent. Her gaze seems inward, a private moment, as she glances down from the camera. Her expression shows no sorrow'. 'The background shows the tent's interior to her right, and to her left an out-of-focus landscape except for a box protruding beyond the tent's outer pole. A flaw in the composition is that Lange angled the camera too low, cropping the top few wisps of the mothers hair out of the frame' (Stones 2007). Is this why this picture was never shown publically? At the time it was taboo to show breastfeeding. That might be another reason why it was never included in the reportages.

Michael Stones calls this "the other migrant mother". Can you agree that this other picture shows a different situation of coping?

'Lange herself and those who published her pictures could hardly be unaware that Photograph #4 is less about the mothers plight than her fitness to nurture despite that plight. A message that life goes on despite penury was not at the top of an agenda that Stryker's agency sought to publicize' (Stones 2007).

'A few years before her death in 1983, Florence Owen Thompson revealed her identity' as being the mother in the picture, in a letter to a local newspaper. She said she felt exploited by it, 'never received a penny, and seemed hurt that the photographer never asked her name' (Stones 2007).
'The pictures published was to show the human side of the Depression, but should not the truths portrayed in the picture include those about Florence herself?' Is she used as the image of a depression instead of being depicted as the one who manage despite the difficulties?

'Norma, the baby in the pictures, said of her mother that she "… was a woman who loved to enjoy life, who loved her children. She loved music and she loved to dance. When she look at that photo of her mother [the Migrant Mother], it saddens her. That's not how she like to remember her." Troy recalled about his childhood years, "They were tough, tough times, but they were the best times we ever had." Norma agreed: "We also had our fun." she says that is what is so notably missing from every face in Lange's Nipomo series - a single smile that signals fun' (Stones 2007).

'Although Florence is not smiling in Photography #4, when unmindful of the camera she seemed content. What Dorothea Lange probably saw in that unguarded instant was a truth that transcended the situation. There was a woman engrossed in doing what she must and accommodated to her role in life. The photograph captures those facts about her'. Stones (2007) argues that 'with its flaws repaired, it might provide a near-iconic image of motherhood but without the trappings of conventional sentimentality'.

When you take pictures you can choose to elaborate the angle of approach. You can choose to tell the story of coping. The story of the good and the hard moments. The angle as seen from yourself, or the angle of your child. You can choose to represent a bigger case, or tell the personal story of you and your child in the city. With the home as the focus, or the family in the neighborhood, or the family in the city- as contrary to the family on the countryside… There are many ways, and you can allow yourself to just start somewhere- and from there to reflect on what you got and how this can be filled out with other pictures later… This will be a process that develops.

5.5.6 HOUSE RENT PROJECT/PHOTO DOCUMENTATION PROJECT; NEXT PHASE

Inspired by our *House Rent Project* the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center are now in collaboration with South China University of Science and Technology preparing for a long-term project that includes a whole street in an urban village in the Pearl River Delta. They will conduct similar experiments but also use the houses and the participating migrant dwellers to both document and comment on the migrant housing situation, with ongoing exhibitions and projects. We have discussed the possibility of letting the *Photo Documentation Project* become part of this street project, both as an ongoing photo collection and as an arena for displaying and discussing the photo stories. This again shows how the two projects; '*House Rent Project*' and '*Photo Documentation Project*' are intertwined, and how it has a capacity to continue to change along with the conditions. There are also talks of a publication combining efforts from the migrant participants and established photographers who together could portray the migrant agency in the city and how it has come to transform the urban ambience.

"He who has arrived has a long way to go."

Lennart Karlström quoting a translation of Thomas Tranströmer from his book Klanger och spår. 1966 in Karlström 1990, p. 294. Original in Swedish: "Den som är framme har en lång väg att gå".

DISCUSSIONS ON SPATIAL RELATIONS

Migration to the Chinese cities is on a massive scale and it constitutes a movement from rural to urban lives for millions. The majority of them envisage no future in the countryside and see their move as a permanent shift from rural to urban. As a means to facilitate the urban development and economic growth, the Chinese authorities support and encourage this process of migration-urbanization, but as experienced by the migrants on the individual level as discussed throughout this thesis, the official Chinese policy does not yet acknowledge this as a permanent shift and millions of rural-urban migrants are still seen as rural citizens even though they have left the countryside and lived in the city for years or even decades.

The urban ambience they attach to when arriving in the city is characterized by transformation. The city is expanding and in this process it encloses rural villages. These villages transform with urban characteristics as they grow into dense settlements and they get a multicultural population with migrant residents from all corners of China thus changing the societal conditions for the local villagers. Most of the spatial qualities the rural village once had are gone due to the densification, and in many instances it grows into a trap where the only thinkable way out is total demolition to relieve the fire hazards of the cramp, damp, dark places of inhuman housing. However, demolition is not a simple answer to the urban challenge of the urban villages. Today more than 70% of the migrants in Guangzhou live in urban villages, and for many it is the best choice available when balancing cost, convenience, reciprocity and their grounding of urban transgression.

Research focus revisited

I have used the previous chapters to look at migrant positioning in relation to urban villages and the city, focusing on migrants' spatial practice in the shifting urban environment with emphasis on the sites of urban villages and their interacting relation to the transforming urban fabric.

From the start the focus on migrants' relation to urban villages was my main inquiry. My intention was to use the urban village as the point of departure and look into situations where the urban village and its residents came to change the surrounding urban ambience through their agency in relation to the possibilities the urban villages gave for alternative urban programs. Through this focus the migrant agency in the village and in the surrounding area became important. Throughout the process my focus changed several times, partly because the situations of the selected sites changed so dramatically

and therefore opened up new angles of approach. When the urban village of Xian Cun was being demolished I got a new insight into the local villagers' struggle, for instance, but it also influenced me to look further into the migrants' situation of relating to a locality in the city that is about to be removed. Even before the demolition in Xian Cun my informants had expressed how little they cared about the urban villages' existence. I had looked at how the migrant residents depended on them, but they kept telling me they did not care if the urban villages were removed. Thus the focus tilted more and more into an inquiry of what constitutes migrant belonging and relation to home when in the city. Also, if the urban village does not represent a stable home for the migrant population, what does it represent? When seen in retrospect, the studies I have made in the urban villages all enlighten this discussion, as the informants and participants have commented on their way of depending on and using the urban village, but also talked of ways of being independent of specific places and ways of bridging relations to places and agency beyond the urban village.

Based on my informants' expressions of a relation to the urban area that goes beyond the urban villages and a relation to home and belonging that goes beyond the home in the city, I will use this final chapter to broaden the discussion in relation to migrant perspectives on positioning, with regard to home and belonging. For this part I build on migrant contributions from the *Photo Documentation Project* and interviews and blog notes from the *House Rent Project*. I look at home and belonging in regard to urban villages, the city and beyond, bridging various scales of locality and agency in migrant positioning as an expression of a translocal approach to multi-sited and multi-scalar belonging that better corresponds to my migrant informants' own ways of explaining their relation to the urban sphere.

6.1 THE TRANSFORMING URBAN FABRIC

6.1.1 PATHS OF TRANSFORMATION AND TOOLS FOR URBANIZATION

Until recently the urban villages were blank spots on the urban map of Guangzhou, but in 2008 the government of Guangzhou launched a scheme of "every village planned", including 1,146 administrative villages within its borders. In this plan they would optimize the layout of the villages by "reconstructing villages-in-the-city, cancelling and merging small villages, dismantling hollow villages, and reducing natural villages"[1].

---

1   All according to Guangzhou government's official web-pages. Source: english.gz.gov.cn: Available at: http://www.newsgd.com/news/guangdong1/content/2008-01-28/content_4316879.htm [Accessed 2008-10-29]. 'Hollow villages' refer to villages that are depopulated. 'Natural villages' refer to villages that still operate as an agrarian unit.

Sometimes 'reconstruction' means total demolition of the existing built fabric and a new built mass that encompasses office towers and apartment blocks for the upper middle class replacing the former cheap housing of the urban village. In other cases, incidents other than the intended planning have significance for the residents relating to the transformation of the village. To the residents it makes no practical difference if the village is fenced or demolished because of an event like the Asian Games or because of major urban agendas.

In its practiced form, the urban village has come to be a tool for urbanization. In an era of transformation it holds capacity for diverse and temporal spatial agencies, providing ambiguity within the urban ambience. It presupposes the form of urbanization that we have seen in China in recent decades. When an urban village vanishes, new tools for catering for primary needs of migrants and the less privileged need to be invented as the rural-urban migration continues. We have to acknowledge that both the migrants and the city face new challenges as their main spatial site of attachment is eradicated.

Although this is a piece of research by an architect carried out within an urban planning department I have not attempted to present how the physical fabric of urban villages can be transformed to contribute to a sustained future urban development or show how the city can replace the programs of the urban villages once they are demolished. Through the methods I have used in the *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, carried out as co-research with migrant participants, I have pointed to possibilities in participating processes that must be a starting point when addressing planning that concerns the migrant residents of the urban villages.

I have observed and discussed different paths urban villages in Guangzhou have taken in the *Cases* chapter, but I have not seen it as my task to suggest improvements to the physical fabric of the urban villages that could be used to argue for their continuous existence, nor have I judged whether the urban villages should be seen as part of the future solution for the many challenges of urban transformation in the Chinese cities. Instead, I point to the role the urban villages play for the migrant population today, while at the same time I point to the migrant view of their attachment to a city, which goes beyond the urban villages, both in regard to situating and agency.

6.1.2   URBAN AMBITION

In my initial encounters with the Pearl River Delta I first felt paralyzed as an architect by my own lack of understanding for the complexity in the context. The curiosity in relation

to how an architect can act in a responsible way that takes into account the implicated actors in planning and projecting in a situation like this, made me want to conduct a PhD study on the subject. In a city like Guangzhou, with such rapid transformation, there are many choices of direction regarding the urban fabric that leads to big consequences for the organization of the city and for the residents of the city. Some user groups are utterly marginalized in the process, without the effects of the implemented transformation being problematized. All involved actors need to acknowledge a more thorough understanding of the frames wherein one designs, demolishes and transforms. With regard to urban villages and the migrant population, I have not seen a deep understanding of the impact the implemented urban moves have for the migrant residents reflected in the practiced policy. When implementation strikes it is rapid and to a large extent led by the economic interests of investors and developers and not by the interests of urban dwellers or residents of the urban villages.

I have kept the focus on the migrants' relation with the city and the urban villages' role in the urban fabric throughout the process. For the focus on the movements of architects and planners in this research I aimed to emphasize the need for a preliminary understanding of ongoing processes that the architects and planners need to relate to, while I have not focused on practice, neither through looking at good practice, analyzing bad practice or through my own attempts of research by design.

Some architect offices and scholars have tried to suggest possible design solutions for the urban villages, for example in 2005 Urbanus Architecture and Design, a Chinese office based in Shenzhen and Beijing, did a study on how to improve Gangxia and Fuxin village in Shenzhen by implementing an additional layer of new infrastructural program on top of and in the midst of the existing village, linking volumes and adding new qualities. However, when architects attempt to show the potential for keeping the urban villages it raises many questions about their focus and concern. For example, it would be irresponsible to suggest an improvisation that did not take into consideration the fire hazards or the problems of light and air quality due to the dense structures of the urban village.

If the proposals work with demolishing of volumes to open up to increase the flow of light and air, this would randomly impact the local villagers depending on the rent. When one house is demolished for the common good of the surrounding buildings to get better air and light qualities, the local villagers owning the demolished house will need compensation. Spatial implementations like this would therefore have to consider

the existing tenure system up against an alternative way to organize the user rights to compensate for lost rental income. Since most of the lodging residents of the village are attracted by the low rent more than by the spatial qualities of the village, it would be difficult to improve the village while answering the demands of the current residents, and not to create an interesting urban fabric with gentrification as a result. In the end all these parameters point to a discussion on urban ambition and that is why I have tried in this process to focus on pointing at the delicate fabric of interests by the many actors performed in the urban village today and leave it to others to design on those premises.

As the urban village as a category is diverse and ambiguous, the actual and imagined paths of transformation are plural. This is exemplified in the earlier discussion about paths of gentrification (Xiaozhou Cun), hiding (Nanting Cun, Xian Cun), demolition (Liede, Xian Cun) and upgrading (Shipai Cun, Tangxia Cun) and presented as an alternative ambition of urban transformation at Times Square. I have throughout tried to discuss how the very different paths of transformation have caused changing conditions that the local villagers and migrant population have had to handle in ways of reorienting their situating or their agency within the urban ambience. I have pointed to the migrants' way of attaching to the urban villages in ways that makes them less vulnerable if the urban village expels them or if the urban village is eradicated.

6.1.3   DUAL CONFIGURATION; CITY-URBAN VILLAGE

In Tianhe district the alleys are wide and the new buildings are tall. I had been to the area several times without noticing the urban villages. The grand axis with the tallest building of 103 stories is flanked with many others, all enclosed in mirrored glass, all boosting their appearance. The urban villages appear small and insignificant in this company, however, their extreme density and small units are very visible once you look at the city fabric from above and see the change in pattern indicating two very different urban typologies between the city and its villages[2]. The new parts of the city are organized in blocks, with visual axes, and every element being part of the same master plan. Even the villages are forced into this plan, with necessary demolition done to squeeze the village into a single block. Still there are traces showing that the villages are organized over time, along streets following the landscape and the order indicated by the ancestors' temples. Both the typology of the city and the village represent order and logic, but their complexity is very different and so is their expression of ambiguity. The new city is seen as representing the new notion of harmony, while the old village is built on traditional

---

2   See for instance the map of Xian Cun with surrounding street-grid in the *Cases* chapter.

principles including perceptions of harmony. The urban villages neither fit into the contemporary nor the traditional notion of harmonious urban development, and are therefore ascribed the role of a resistant force, forcing the expression of ambiguity to represent a counterculture.

The modern city is understood to be what can save society from the negativity found everywhere that is not cleaned and prepared for the modern urban reality. Through their 'scientific development concept' the authorities communicate how one can eradicate urban/rural sicknesses, exemplified by the urban villages, to achieve a harmonious society. 'Cleaning up and combing out' unwanted elements results in a more homogenous urban sphere that marginalizes a portion of the population (Siu 2007, p. 334). With a broader concept of harmony one can perhaps argue that if there is any such thing as a form of harmony in the Chinese urban reality today, it could be that of the symbiosis between the city and the urban villages, as they function not separately, but in close interrelation with each other. Together they create a new typology of social organization, depending on the flexibility and ambiguity of the urban village, but at the same time depending on the transforming city with its network and demands.

The urban village is not just a tool for assimilation and urbanization though. It is also a tool for facilitating the discriminating hukou system to sustain its rural/urban divide within the borders of the city. In this way the urban village is the spatial arrangement that makes possible the continuous exploitation of a large share of the population within the city. Although throughout this text I have pointed to how the migrants position themselves, the framing of the urban village is a deliberate emplacement and displacement of the marginalized population behind tall walls out of sight of the surrounding city. In that sense the urban village is a stigma that is linked to this disgraceful policy of discriminating against a majority of the Chinese population, once within the cities.

In a city that is equally plural in regard to spatial qualities, the urban village is an arena of flexibility, but it is also an arena for exploitation. It is a haven for many, but it also acts like the harsh sea. Transferring the place-frame to a timeframe, one can see similarities with *'A tale of two cities'* (1859) where Dickens talks about the era of urbanization as: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" (Dickens 1859). Both the modern city and the urban village carries several opposing faces; the potential of being the best of places and the worst of places[3].

3   Seeing the city as a composite of several cities (Sandercock 2003) links this to the assemblage theory of Deleuze and Guattari (1980) but also to the translocality of Brickell and Datta (2011).

6.1.4 DUAL CONFIGURATION; URBAN-RURAL MIGRANT RESIDENTS

As the village represents a counterculture so does its migrant residents. It is a form of interference between places and being, that blurs the image and cross-connects identities and capacities of representation that are not necessarily comparable; countryside-rural resident-urban village. But in the public discourse they mingle into one characteristic identity of urban chaotic mesh.

"…she reeked of poor province. I don't know where it showed the most, maybe in her cheekbones, or around her mouth, or smack in the middle of her eyes. It's hard to say that sort of thing about a province or a face. There was poverty in every province in the country, and in every face. But Lola's province, whether you saw it in her cheekbones or around her mouth or smack in the middle of her eyes, was perhaps poorer still. More land than landscape." (Müller 1999, p. 2) [4]

"I saw them carrying mulberry trees out of their province and into their faces."
(Müller 1999, p. 34)

"Everyone's a villager here. Our heads may have left home, but our feet are just standing in a different village. No cities can grow in a dictatorship, because everything stays small when it's being watched." (Müller 1999, p. 44)

---

4   Citations by Herta Müller from the book '*The Land of Green Plums*' (1993); on young students leaving the impoverished countryside in search of better prospects in the city, in Romania, during Ceausescu's regime.

6.2   ON MIGRANT SPATIAL PRACTICE OF POSITIONING IN THE FORM OF AGENCY, NEGOTIATION AND SITUATEDNESS

In the following section I will look into the spatial practice of agency and negotiation and the spatial practice of situatedness, home and belonging. As these aspects are so closely interlinked it is most fruitful to discuss them alongside each other and not as separate categories. An 'agency in place' is a form of situatedness, and that is made clear when I chose to use the word positioning for both the situating and the agency. A positioning for the being in place and doing in place.

6.2.1   MIGRANT ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE URBAN VILLAGE AND THE CITY

Most of the migrants I interviewed showed no sentiment towards the demolition of the villages where they lived. To say that the area as a whole would be a better place if the urban village where they resided was demolished seems strange at first. A transformation resulting in demolition of several urban villages in the CBD would inevitably mean difficulties for the migrant inhabitants normally residing in the specific village for its convenient location. My informants say that personally they do not think it will be difficult to find another village to live in, or another cheap place to rent. As of now, that is true. In the longer run though, accommodating all the migrants who have to move out of the many core city urban villages will require new means of cheap habitation, and one will be less likely to find it centrally located as with the core city villages today. When my informants answered the question it is with reference to the possibilities of the current situation. However, it can also be read as an answer that in a more general manner addresses a way of undoing oneself as a migrant subject. It can be argued to be an expression of decoding (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 442) or an expression of the migrants' understanding of themselves as assimilated with the city and its future best. They came to work in the city, not to live in a certain urban village.

Through his study of migrant discourse in Chinese contemporary film, Dror Kochan (2009) shows how a new and alternative discourse is emerging. While the dominant discourse places the migrants in an "...urban periphery or in peri-urban areas, socially separated from the city" (Kochan 2009, p. 298), the alternative discourse of the socio-spatial divide is able to remove the migrants from these peri-urban areas and instead place them in the city itself. Their involvement in the city life, but also in their own cause and direction of life, is evident in these expressions and can be seen in opposition to the migrants

portrayed in the confined spaces of the urban village in Kochan's argument. From my migrant informants I get a similar picture of them positioning themselves in the city, and not solely in a specific urban village. This has been elaborated in the *Cases* chapter when discussing the contributions for the *Photo Documentation Project*, and it will be further elaborated later in this chapter when considering home and belonging.

6.2.2 MIGRANTS NOT IN OPPOSITION TO THE CURRENT NOTION OF DESIRED URBAN EXPRESSION

The Tianhe district, Xian Cun street renting house management service center said the average stay for a migrant resident in Xian Cun was six months. The migrants tend to think of the stay in the village as temporary, and as a result of the many rumors of demolition going on for years, they have got used to thinking of the village as a place that will eventually be gone, and for some they even express this as being a development for the better, resulting in a more beautiful urban neighborhood. As individuals, most of the migrants I have talked to are not in opposition to the current notion of harmonious urban development, and sincerely think the village areas become better places when they assimilate with the modern city surrounding it. They do not resist a movement towards the desired urban expression, but are still seen as resistant forces against this ideal state. In urban villages, resistance is thus not uproar, it is rather a state of disturbance or a constant noise (Serres 1980) by the village itself and by the migrant population within.

6.2.3 MIGRANTS PORTRAYING THEIR EVERYDAY USE OF THE VILLAGE AND CITY

When portraying their everyday use of the city, the participants of the *Photo Documentation Project* do not distinguish the urban village from the city as visualized in the *Cases* chapter. In their representation, the village is more to be seen as an integrated neighborhood within the urban sphere. Some portray their home in the urban village, while in the same story of everyday practice they present us with photos of how they use the public places within the city or how they relate to the absorbing work environment, sometimes located in the city, in shops or construction sites, sometimes in gated factory areas, and sometimes in the village. It also seems the relation to the surrounding city is becoming stronger as the city grows denser and more active around the urban village. This can be seen as a growing tendency among the participants through their talks and their photos. The migrant residents I spoke to in Shigangxi Cun in 2007-08 said they would usually stay in the village or close by in their spare time, and they felt the village was not closely connected to Panyu city center. They would have to take the bus to get to the city center. The center was for them a place for occasional visits, and these visits were not reflected in their photos as an everyday activity.

After the Panyu square area was completed close by, the city in a way moved in their direction and by foot they suddenly had access to parks and plazas that could be used free of charge. It transformed their way of relating to the city and to urban citizens. On Sundays they would stay in the park by the square. It is big enough for everyone to find themselves a place of their own, a pavilion or a bench in the shadow of a tree to while away the hours. I was told by several informants that it was one of their most desired and used urban initiatives. The proximity of the Panyu square area also triggered a transformation of the physical appearance of the village. It is no longer located on the urban fringe with fields and factory areas as the only neighbors, but it now finds itself close to the metro stations and the central business plaza. The inner village roads look the same as they did five years ago, but the tall buildings fronting the city grid have got cake shop chains that are usually not located in urban villages but near the metro stations and in other typical high-rise locations.

6.1 On subjective positioning. *Photo Documentation Project.*

As a result the inhabitants of the village do not need to go to Panyu city center to meet the city; they find it right around the corner in their own village. The photos reflect this change as their everyday photos of the last few years contain environments that we could formerly only see in their 'out of the ordinary' excursion photos.

As a group, the participants in the *Photo Documentation Project* relate to very different physical and social settings. Living in the village or in some dormitory in the gated factory areas, or guarding the fences and sweeping the stone floors of the new real estate projects, all provide very different everyday environments. If they spend the days guarding the garden of a property they still live in a dormitory. If they happen to work in an ordered and clean factory they still meet with their friends in the inner part of the urban villages. Their situating transgresses these distinct separate spaces, and the inter-connections between these sites frame their subjective and diverse life experiences as migrants in the city.

Among the participants some live in ordered, clean environments, while others are surrounded with mess. When they zoom into details of their immediate and subjective relations to the environment though, there are both more similarities and more differences to be observed across these borders of neat/messy/village/city in the pictures of the participants in the documentation project. This can often be seen as ways

of bridging the different local scales, expressed in the local-local relation-orientation of the translocal approach for instance, through narratives that express their subjective relation to aspects of heritage, family, work or more ambiguous expressions of relations to dreams and aspirations of a life in the city or contradictory relations to the modern sphere as such.

6.2   Ambiguous expressions of relations to dreams and aspirations of a life in the city. *Photo Documentation Project.*

The example of the tricycles outside Xian Cun in the *Theory* chapter can be linked to one of Kochan's examples of this new migrant discourse and its' potential. Kochan (2009) mentions the film '*Beijing Bicycle'* from 2000 by Wang Xiaoshuai. Here we see how the bicycle, rather than the hukou, represents a tool towards integration into the city. Buying a bicycle is not just buying a vehicle, it is an investment in an interaction with the city, through work, through mobility and situatedness. In the film the drama surrounds the negotiations involved in getting, keeping and using the bicycle. The character rebuilds his social identity through the use of the bike. "The public sphere can thus be seen as an arena of discursive interaction, allowing a more accessible discussion in which participation is not limited only to the political realm, but can exist in the social and cultural sphere as well"(Kochan 2009, p. 303).

Sustaining a bicycle and finding a way to use it to raise an income would necessarily not be easy for a newly arrived migrant if they were not attached to an urban village with its opportunities for contacts and reciprocity. In the interviews I have done, the delivery men describe how they bought their bicycle from contacts they established in the urban village, and when the cycle is not in use either they have keep it with them or store it in the guarded bicycle sheds inside the urban villages. Many of the delivery men provide business cards with contact information for clients coming from all over the city, but still most of their clients have some relation to the activities of the village. Even though they operate on a multi-local level including the surrounding city, the facilities and opportunities created within and through the practice of the urban village are crucial.

6.3 MIGRANTS' HOMES IN THE CITY

In Mandarin the word for home "jia" is also the word for household and family[5]. The sign depicts a pig under a roof. This is to be understood as a sign that describes a place of prosperity and protection, as it was traditionally not for the poor to eat pork on a regular basis. Also the wild boar was said to not hide when hunted, but to turn around to fight for its territory and to secure its piglets.

Motasim and Heynen (2011) write about 'home' in relation to displacement for internal migrants in regard to material culture and resistance among the displaced Sudanese. In their article they place attention on "mobile symbols of permanency". This is to some

---

5   The ancient Greek term OIKOS is used for household, house and family, similar to the Chinese (Mandarin) DJA; house, household, family.

extent also relevant for the practice of Chinese rural-urban migrants, but in the visual contributions from the *Photo Documentation Project* (see last part of *Cases* chapter) it seems the symbols of permanency are not as mobile as the migrants themselves. Their childhood home of the hometown functions for some as a supportive backstop and security net (Saunders 2010) and also figures in their imagination of permanency. In their life in the city, however, permanency is depicted either vaguely or as an obvious illusion. The Sudanese women in Motasim and Heynen's article (2011) would put emphasis on their household items. While I will not argue about them being symbols of permanency, they are also small and convenient to move and practical tools that ease the everyday life in a displaced home. The participants in the *Photo Documentation Project* would more often show a picture of a meal shared than their cutlery or cooking, the exception being the kitchen and their family members cooking in their home town, which was frequently photographed. Objects in their photos would often be items recently bought in the city, or items produced by them to be shipped away.

If we instead read their belongings as relating to a multi-scalar locality (Brickell and Datta 2011), the migrants do, however, include aspects of permanency in their description of attachment, but not expressed as something mobile, and not expressed as something located within their new life in the city.

This is maybe explained with the way the rural population moves to the cities. Their way of traveling is often comparable with tourists, carrying their entire luggage in a bag and using regular public transport like busses or trains. They often do not have a job or a key to a door to move into when arriving in the city, meaning both the job-situation and the dwelling-situation are uncertain or of a transitory nature and it is therefore normal to not bring many belongings from home as it would complicate the move. If they move into a dormitory it often has an equipped kitchen, or they will have their meals served. Both dormitories and urban village accommodation usually contain furniture such as a bed, a table, some stools and perhaps a locker. What they will bring apart from clothes is a sleeping mat and some linen for the bed and for curtains. This constitutes a soft and intimate architecture just one step away from clothing. Through this some participants emphasize how they manage to create an intimate place in an alien space as seen in the story of Ms Bie later in this chapter.

6.3.1 HOMEMAKING
Being a migrant concerns homemaking in many aspects, some of them very temporal, others with long-term ambitions. Some of them relating to a home of their own, others related to a home for others. For some migrants, through their work they take part in

constructing new homes in the city, cleaning, guarding or maintaining apartments. Or they take care of urban families who would otherwise find it difficult to maintain a home because of their own absence and lack of time. Part of their wages is usually sent to their hometown to sustain the home of their parents and children and in some instances the salary they earn in the city is saved for a future home in the home village.

The bunk bed is one of the core physical elements of the temporary home of the migrants in the city. It figures in most of the stories from the *Photo Documentation Project*. When living in the houses or apartments of the urban villages or in the factory dormitories or barracks, the migrants get attached to a bunk bed. It acts like a room within the room. Often it provides the only private sphere they are allowed. The lower bed is the most desirable, as the framework provides the opportunity to put up a mosquito net and curtains to create a small room of their own under the top bunk. Often they extend the frame with bamboo sticks to create a similar quality for the top bed. When only the lower bed is taken they will use the upper bed as an open shelf to store their personal belongings. The sphere within the confines of the bunk bed is the most intimate and private place within a typical migrant's dwelling.

6.3 Bunk beds. *Photo Documentation Project.*

6.3.2 HOME IN THE FACTORY

When considering aspects of home for the migrants, sometimes the life they live within the factory area represents a broader part of life than where they reside, even for the ones not sleeping in the factory dormitories. Working days are long and they tend to eat and sleep inside their work place during the day. When the migrants themselves show images and tell about their everyday life in the factories in the *Photo Documentation Project* there are pictures of co-workers standing together in groups, hurrying to write text messages before working hours start in the morning. There are pictures of posters declaring who is penalized for using their mobile phones in working hours or returning late after a break. There are pictures of workers sleeping by their desk during working hours and workers sleeping under their desks in their lunch break. There are pictures of big empty canteens and crowded lines, tables for eight, set with three small dishes to share, and co-workers laughing and eating ice cream after lunch. The different working environments result in very different life conditions: for some of them it is a dive into a situation of an all-embracing, absorbing environment of absence and shortage, staying behind tall fences and barred windows in large factory halls or in small dark dressmaker's shops. For others it provides a frame for a well ordered life, where they manage to create an intimate sphere for rest and subjective preference within the confines of the factory.

6.3.3 MIGRANT DWELLINGS IN THE URBAN VILLAGE

While the many migrants who live in the dormitories of the factories have to share a room with four to eight people of the same sex, with strict rules of no cooking, no visits from outside, lights out at night and so forth (Ngai 2005), the life in the urban village provides better conditions to create a home and to sustain a family life on their own, either in an old farmhouse or in an apartment in one of the many new housing estates. The urban village also provides a place for self-employed migrants who can rent a dual work/living unit. A base unit often contains a workshop, restaurant or shop along with the living quarters for the family running the business placed on a mezzanine or in the back.

For some the dwelling in the urban village is spacious and with all utilities. For others it only serves the most basic needs and does not provide much more than a bed. For them they tend to extensively use the surroundings for activities usually associated with the home-sphere. They might have to go outside to cook, or to use the toilet or shower facilities or to get internet access. Since their units are also often shared with strangers, meeting friends is something that happens in other arenas, like on the pavement, in the park or in a restaurant.

6.4 Daily lives in the confines of the factory. *Photo Documentation Project.*

6.3.4 REPRESENTATIONS OF HOME AND BELONGING THROUGH THE PHOTO DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

In the previous chapter I described how I used a selection of pictures from the *Photo Documentation Project* to highlight experiences of home and belonging through the four categories described in the *Cases* chapter; their hometown, the dwelling in the urban village and city, the legal situation being a migrant and the migrant's agency in the urban ambience.

Ms Bie for instance described her own surroundings pointing to individual concerns and showed how identities came into being with small means. Through her pictures she showed pride for her work and her workplace, but also for her own sphere around the bed. Through her images of the qualities of the textiles she surrounds herself with, in work and in private, she pointed to the difference in the ambience of work and home (see also picture 5.57 in Cases chapter). The patterns she has added to her personal surroundings have an intimate character and remind her of a domain different from a factory. It is for her about home, childhood, grandparents and the garden. Her roommates are presented posing in the photos in the same informal manner as other participants have presented their family members in their hometown.

Mr Wang, who I also wrote about in the *Cases* chapter, lost a hand in a work accident. In one of his photo stories he presented how other work-injured migrants who had returned to his hometown managed to establish a livelihood in the countryside on their own, building up a mushroom factory. Once he showed us a series of traditional agrarian tools he saw in a museum in the city. Showing them out of context, he presented them in context by bridging the presentation in the museum with the story of how his relatives still used the tools actively in the fields. This was a long presentation, as he talked more about the work than about the pictures. In the photo festival in Lianzhou he photographed the exhibitions to share with the other participants of our project; pictures of hard-working migrants and the work of a handless photographer, showing how both his subjective story and his participation in the *Photo Documentation Project* was part of broadening the plural narrative of his migrant self-representation.

6.5 Ms Bie's pictures. *Photo Documentation Project.*

I also want to use his example to talk about orientation to the political and social issues regarding migrant status within the city and the life and family left in the hometown. Through his photo stories he was questioning the implications of the individuals affected by migration, pointing to the problems but also pointing to the ways ahead. Directing the camera straight at one handless worker after another, confronting the harsh realities of finding they are no longer wanted as laborers in the city, Mr Wang also shows in his story what capabilities they brought home. In both the agrarian and the urban villages the positioning and orientation are in many ways drawn elsewhere, with migrants and local residents working outside the village and orienting towards a transforming urban ambience while also looking towards what is left in the countryside. The boundaries of the 'neighborhood' are expanded, hybrid and fluid.

In his photo stories Mr Wang always reminded us of his many bearings, his migrant fellows in the city, blooming fruit trees in his hometown and the aspects of cultural continuation, as he brought along his background as a farmer in the city, and as an active member of the Migrant Workers' Documentation Center when in the countryside. It was not a story of the uprooted though, as the many different places he related to created an intertwined context (see picture 3.6 in Theory chapter and picture 5.61 in th Cases chapter).

6.4   THE STRANGER CHANGER

"The stranger, remarks the sociologist Georg Simmel, learns the art of adoption more searchingly, if more painfully, than people who feel entitled to belong, at peace with their surroundings. In Simmel's view, the foreigner also holds up a mirror to the society into which he or she enters, since the foreigner cannot take for granted ways of life that seem to natives just natural. So great are the changes required to alter humankind's dealings with the physical world that only this sense of self-displacement and estrangement can drive the actual practices of change…" (Sennett, 2009, p. 13 accounting for Georg Simmel [6])

"There is thus little doubt that rural labor flows over the past fifteen years have launched a silent 'social revolution' in Chinese society that is challenging the existing rural-urban divide, reconfiguring the state-society relationships, restructuring the patriarchal family, and remaking class and gender relations in particular" (Pun Ngai, 2005, p. 55).

---

6   Georg Simmel (1964) *The Stranger.* In: Wolff, Kurt, trans. and eds. *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press.

6.4.1   UNCERTAIN BELONGING

For Jiajun and many other migrants the urban village is a hostile place far from the imagination of a secure home in the city. They rent an apartment with no valid contractual bond that can assure them they can stay or continue to pay the same rent next month or next year. The urban villages are fire hazards and robberies are a constant risk. Jiajun would repeatedly come back to this issue when we talked about her dwelling in the urban village, talking about her own fear and of neighbors' experiences with robberies and theft.

Jiajun expressed how her feeling of not having a home is related to the uncertainty in the anticipation of a home in the urban village. Her relation to the village was put on trial in 2007 when her father died, her mother moved away and she suddenly found herself confronted with the fact that she had nothing to return to in her hometown, but also no family or home in the urban village. After this the notion of how fragile the pillars a migrant home in the urban village are based on became clear for her. She explained how the notion that you can never be sure whether or not you have a physical dwelling in the urban village tomorrow makes her refuse to believe in a home in the urban village.

For Jiajun's daughter the move back to the old part of the urban village meant she could have a more free life. There were no cars in the narrow streets of the village and she was allowed to run in and out of the apartment as she liked. Several of her friends lived in the same street and they all loved running around chasing butterflies and grass hoppers. She had her parents, grandmother and some other relatives all living in the same street, and they all kept an eye on her. To her, this place was home, she had only visited Jiajun's grandparents in the hometown village once. The daughter and her friends in the street could all speak Mandarin and their local dialect from Hunan province too. They could not speak Cantonese and they only spoke Mandarin with the local villagers. Neither she nor her mother knew anything about farming, and they saw no future other than in the city.

6.4.2   PLACE-(IN)DEPENDENCE

In Xian Cun the local villagers maintained the control of most buildings and common places within the village. They rented out housing and business leases to the migrant residents. In this situation, the migrants cannot depend on power over space as a means to gain control of their lives. This is different from the migrant entrepreneur communities in Beijing described by Zhang (2001) for instance. In the case of Zheijiang Cun, Zhang writes about the migrant bosses and how they build up influence to possess power over space.

She names social connections of migrant leaders, including kinship ties, native-place networks, and patron-client relationship, all of which prove efficient even in a situation where the whole village is under threat. Through their connections they managed both to keep production going through a temporary move while the community was destructed and regained control of the area after the reconstruction, controlling housing, market places and social networks. The strategies and tactics used by the migrants in Zheijiang Cun to possess power over space can therefore be compared with strategies mainly used by the local villagers in Xian Cun and the other villages I have looked at in Guangzhou, and not the overall migrant population. The difference is of course the historical rights the local villagers have gained to control their land while the migrant bosses in Beijing have managed to possess this power without being local villagers.

I have described some instances of migrants leasing to other migrants in Xian Cun, for instance the bicycle guard leasing a corner of her locale to the book renter, and I was told all the telephone box shops in the village were also controlled by one migrant boss, but this is small-scale and more the exception than the rule as far as I have observed. The temporary occupation of spaces that I have discussed with the example of the use of the widening of the old main street or the new market in the former school in Xian Cun depend on certain types of spaces, but as the use rights are not the starting point but rather a strategy of soft power, these are examples depending more on agency than on a specific locality within an urban village. If we connect this to Jiajun's refusal to believe in a home rested on the physical frame of the urban village and the importance Kochan (2009) sees in the bike being the integration into the city, and we could add- not the bed or the bedroom where the cyclist sleeps-, we could explain how and why the migrants perform tactics regarding control of their life situation that is less place-dependent.

6.4.3   SITUATEDNESS
Thinking back to the case of Xiao Meizhou, the migrant mother selling soles in the curving of the old main street in Xian Cun, in the *Theory* chapter I accounted for how she and other migrants used soft power and minimum force (Sennett) to temporarily territorialize a place in the urban village.

If this temporary territorialization of a place in the urban village constituted their whole latitude regarding space, the migrants' situatedness would be miserable, as they could be said to be 'placed' in the liminal peri-urban in-between state. The migrants are, however, not only a mirage, vaguely positioning themselves within the temporality and liminality of the city. On the contrary, through the subjective stories I have presented

throughout this text I hope to have shown how the urban village in the city is an arena where the migrant residents, through their everyday practice and attitudes subvert diverse boundaries, not only that of the urban-rural divide, but equally important that of their own subjective experience of belonging and connecting to various multi-scalar urban spheres, through local-local relations, within and beyond the urban village.

Xiao Meizhou expressed how she was satisfied with the rent and the landlord keeping the house in order. For a while the apartment was a good option, but for her, living in Xian Cun was a temporary solution. She dreamt of going to Shenzhen.

6.4.4   LOCALIZED DISPLACEMENT AND TRANSLOCAL BELONGING

While the rural migrants arriving in the cities must be seen as part of a permanent shift from an agricultural to a non-agricultural population, their current temporal permit to stay does not allow them to settle their mind or body on a home in a specific urban village or the city. They are forced to think of home as something that traverses spaces and scales that captures their entire belonging to both the countryside left behind and the city where they are only temporarily allowed to reside. Since 2010, migrant residents in Guangzhou have to renew their permit to stay in the city every year. Most migrants came to work in the city, not to live in a certain urban village. While their attachment to a dwelling and a neighborhood in the urban village is temporal and transitional, their ambition of managing the new urban condition is of a more lasting character. They relate to the city and not only to the urban village in order to reshape themselves as modern urban subjects.

For my migrant informants the urban villages are a pattern of accessible facilities in an extended network all over the city. It provides a typology of attachment that in the migrants' concern could be applied to other places and other urban villages. The urban village is constituted as a place through connections to other places further away from the locality of the neighborhood and because of this one can perhaps argue along the same lines as Wise (2011) as she did regarding Chinese migrant communities in Australia, where for the migrants "the displacement is localized, while belonging is translocal" (Wise 2011, p. 96).

China is facing a big population of rural-urban migrants who have lost attachment to a home left behind but who keep the memory of 'home' as one of their strongest aspirations of a 'good life'[7]. Through their move away from their hometown they have come to redefine 'home'. While it was previously based on both a location and a family staying together, many of the migrants I have interviewed have expressed how after their move they emphasize the importance of family bonds across borders rather than a place to call home. With this mental change, they handle the uncertainty and instability of life in the city by abolishing the traditional concept of 'home'. Perceived as a multi-scalar belonging that captures broader both regarding time and space, this means in some situations they can relate to a more dynamic and flexible structure of 'home', while for other situations this creates a new type of vulnerability as a more 'subjective home' makes more individual demands without providing the security of a hometown.

6.4.5 GROUNDING A SPATIAL INCLUSION FOR THE MIGRANTS IN THE CITY

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to apply a migrant perspective as an alternative reading on the urban villages' role in the city and the migrant belonging in a transforming urban ambience, focusing on analysis of migrant positioning in regard to agency and situatedness. For this research I build on observations and migrant narratives in relation to the urban village, the city and aspects of home and belonging.

My migrant informants have refused to ground their belonging in the city to a certain urban village while they have emphasized their urban ambitions. I argue that they meet the uncertain future of the urban villages with an attitude to positioning that is less place-dependent. They relate to a shifting urban ambience with a positioning both in regard to urban villages and in regard to a larger multi-scalar locality that includes the urban ambience in a broader landscape of belonging. I therefore propose we bridge the thoughts of temporarily territorializing a place as a means to subvert the diverse boundaries for the migrants in the city with the thoughts of situating within the multi-sited and multi-scalar localities.

This enables us to see how the migrants, through their negotiations of spatial agency and situatedness, can be said to trespass boundaries through their ability to connect and interlink. Thus, through their practice, the migrants are challenging the massive

---

7   Of course this can also go the other way around, with young people fleeing the strain of the traditional family and plights of home. For some of the young girls the move to the city is partly a flight from a traditional patriarchal dominance that would restrict their future life in the countryside (Ngai 2005). Losing a 'home' to become a subject is for many a relief, although filled with contradictory feelings.

temporality of the urban ambience through a multi-local positioning, relating to both the urban village, the city and beyond. Through the methods I have used in the *House Rent Project* and *Photo Documentation Project*, carried out as co-research with migrant participants, I have pointed to possibilities in participating processes that must be a starting point when addressing planning that concerns the migrant residents of the urban villages. This understanding of migrant positioning, based on migrant narratives, can be a premise for recognizing and negotiating a spatial inclusion for the migrants in the city.

VII   REFERENCES

Amnesty International (2007) *People's Republic of China. Internal Migrants: Discrimination and Abuse. The human cost of an economic 'miracle'.* AI Index ASA 17/008/2007.

Anon author (2010) *China's Guangdong Province bans barbeque stalls in 11 cities ahead of Asian Games*. Sify News [online], Available at: http://www.sify.com/news/china-s-guangdong-province-bans-barbeque-stalls-in-11-cities-ahead-of-asian-games-news-international-kk0jOcibecc.html [Accessed: 2011-03-03]

Anon author (2010) *China to reduce vehicles during Asian Games*. OneIndia news [online], Available at: http://news.oneindia.in/2010/10/25/china-to-reduce-vehicle-movement-asian-games.html [Accessed: 2011-03-03]

Anon author (2009) No title, [CD], 2 CDs received 2009-11-18, informal publication by local villagers in Xian Cun with photo documentation and texts including lists of properties jointly owned by the village, statements, letters to authorities and answers from authorities.

Anon author (2004) *Shenzhen to clean up rented houses*. Shenzhen Daily [online], Available at: http://japanese.china.org.cn/english/China/101206.htm [Accessed: 2011-02-15].

Baudelaire, Charles (2010) *The Painter of Modern Life.* London: Penguin books Ltd.

Bettison, Dominic (2010) *The Shape of Cities to Come,* European China Daily [online], Available at: http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-12/31/content_11781671.htm [Accessed: 2011-03-01].

Bradcher, Keith (2009) *Clash of Subways and Car Culture in Chinese Cities.* The New York Times [online] 2009-03-27. New York edition. Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/27/business/worldbusiness/27transit.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1 [Accessed: 2010-09-11].

Bray, Christopher (2011) *Thinking the Impossible: French Philosophy Since 1960 by Gary Gutting. Review:* The Observer, [online], Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/mar/20/thinking-impossible-philosopy-gary-gutting [Accessed: 2011-05-10].

Brickell, Kathrine and Datta, Ayona. (eds.) (2011) *Translocal Geographies. Spaces, Places, Connections*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Burawoy, Michael (2000) *Global Ethnography: Connections and Imaginations in a postmodern World*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Calvino, Italo (1972) *Invisible Cities.* Translated by William Weaver, 1974. (my edition 1978). Orlando: Harcourt.

Casey, Edward S., 1997 (my edition 2006) *The Fate of Place. A Philosophical History.* Berkeley and Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

Cao, Fei (2005-2006) *What are you doing here*?, [multimedia art] Siemens Art Program, Foshan.

Cao, Fei (2004) *A Mirage*, [photograph] Astrup Fernley Collection, Photo and Video 45454.

Chan, Anita (2001) *China's Workers under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy.* Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Chan, Kam Wing (2010) The Global Financial Crisis and Migrant Workers in China: 'There is No Future as a Labourer; Returning to the Village has No Meaning'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 34, September, pp. 659-677.

Chan, Kam Wing (2009) The Chinese Hukou System at 50. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 50 (2), pp. 197-221.

Chan, Kam Wing and Zhang, Li (1999) The Hukou System and Rural-Urban Migration: Processes and Changes. *The China Quarterly*, 160, pp. 818-855.

Chan, Jenny (2009) Meaningful Progress of Illusory Reform? Analyzing China's Labor Contract Law. *New Labor Forum*, 18 (2), pp.43-51.

Chan, Roger C.K. and Zhao, Simon X.B. (2002) The Relationship between Administrative Hierarchy Position and City Size Development in China. *Geojournal*, 56, pp. 97-112.

Chan, Roger C.K., Yao, Y.M. and Zhao, Simon X.B. (2003) Self-help housing strategy for temporary population in Guangzhou, China. *Habitat International,* 27 (1) pp. 19-35.

Chase, John, Crawford, Margaret and Kaliski, John (1999) *Everyday Urbanism*. New York: Monacelli Press.

Chaslot, Guillaume Maurice Jean-Bernard (2010) *Monte-Carlo Tree Search,* Ph.D. [online] Universiteit Maastricht, Available at:
 http://www.unimaas.nl/games/files/phd/Chaslot_thesis.pdf [Accessed: 2011-06-30]

Chen, Yiu Por, White, Michael J. and Wu, Fulong (2008) Urbanization, Institutional Change, and Sociospatial Inequality in China, 1990-2001. In: Logan, John R. *Urban China in Transition*. Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing. Ch. 5.

China Import and Export Fair, official webpage, [online] Available at: http://www. cantonfair.org.cn/en/about/detail.aspx?oid=131

Chu, Shanna (eds.) (2008) *Last Dragon Boat of Ancient Liede Village Settles in Museum 2008.* Life of Guangzhou, [online], Available at: http://www.lifeofguangzhou.com/node_10/node_37/node_85/2008/01/25/1201 22289633364.shtml [Accessed: 2011-11-25].

Chung, Chuihua Judy, Inaba, Jeffrey, Koolhaas, Rem and Leon, Sze Tsung (eds.) (2001) *Great Leap Forward. Harvard Design School Project on the City 1.* Köln: Taschen GmbH.

Chung, Him (2010) Building an image of Villages-in-the-City: A Clarification of China's Distinct Urban Spaces. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research,* 34 (2), pp. 421-37.

Cowie, A.P., (eds.) (1989) *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English,* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Creswell, John W. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design. Choosing Among Five Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Culture and public action forum, webpage, [online] based on the book; Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton, eds., 2004. Culture and Public Action, Stanford University Press, 2004. Available at: http://www.cultureandpublicaction.org/conference/a_and_d_ anthropologicalcritiques.htm [Accessed: 2011-11-04]

Dadds, Marion and Hart, Susan (2001) *Doing Practitioner Research Differently*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Datu, Kerwin (2010) *Rahul Mehrotra and the "kinetic city": designing for informality in Mumbai.* The Global Urbanist, Planning, [online] Available at: http://globalurbanist. com/2010/05/24/rahul-mehrotra-and-the-kinetic-city-designing-for-informality-in-mumbai.aspx [Accessed: 2011-04-12].

Dickens, Charles, (1859) *A tale of two cities*. London: Chapman & Hall Ltd. [online] Available at openlibrary.com: http://www.archive.org/stream/adventuresofoliv00dickiala#page/n401/ mode/2up [Accessed: 2011-11-13].

DeLanda, Manuel (2006) *A New Philosophy of Society. Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity.* London: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix (1980) *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Translated by Brian Massumi, 1987. (my edition 2004). London, New York: Continuum.

Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix (1991) *What is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell, 1994. New York: Columbia University Press.

Dorrian, Mark and Rose, Gillian (eds.) (2003) *Deterritorialisations … revisioning. Landscapes and Politics*. London and New York: Black Dog Publishing Limited.

ECUST, n.d., *Release of Index of the Harmonious Development in Cities of China. Outcome of the First National Index Evaluating both Scientific and Harmonious Development in the Cities*, [online] release by research group in East China University of Science and Technology (ECUST), Available at: http://www.ecust.edu.cn/s/2/t/31/14/b3/info5299.htm [Accessed: 2009-02-17].

Edelmann, Frédéric (eds.) (2008) *In the Chinese city. Perspectives on the transmutations of an empire.* Barcelona: Actar Publications.

Erdinast-Vulcan, Daphna (2008) The I that Tells Itself: A Bakhtinian Perspective on Narrative Identity. *Narrative*, 16 (1), pp. 1-15.

Fan, Cindy C. (2008) Migration, *Hukou* and the City. In: Shahid, Yusuf and Saich, Anthony, (eds.) *China Urbanizes, Consequences, Strategies and Policies.* Washington: The World Bank, [online] Available at:
http://china.usc.edu/App_Images//Fan.pdf [Accessed: 2011-03-15].

Foster, Peter and Moore, Malcolm. *China to create largest mega city in the world with 42 million people,* The Telegraph, [online], Available at:
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/8278315/China-to-create-largest-mega-city-in-the-world-with-42-million-people.html [Accessed: 2011-02-02].

Friedl, Peter (2006) *Theory of Justice 1992-2006.* Barcelona: MACBA (Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona). Distributed by ACTAR D.

Fu, Diana (2009) A cage of voices: Producing and doing dagongmei in Contemporary China. *Modern China*, 35, pp. 527-561.

Gaetano, Arianne M and Jacka, Tamara (eds.) (2004) *On the Move. Women and Rural-to-Urban Migration in Contemporary China.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Gale, Ken and Sikes, Pat (2006). *Narrative Approaches to Education Research*, [online] Available at:
http://www.edu.plymouth.ac.uk/resined/narrative/narrativehome.htm#References [Accessed: 2011-11-09].

Gao, Kobe and Keyton, David (2010). *Guangzhou old cinemas go with the tide.* Life of Guangzhou. [online], Available at:
http://www.lifeofguangzhou.com/node_981/node_989/node_993/node_1025/2010/11/01/128860050181756.shtml [Accessed: 2011-02-25].

Glaser, Barney G. (2002) Constructivist Grounded Theory? *FQS (Forum Qualitative Social Research*) 3 (3), Art.12. [online] Available at: http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/825/1792 [Accessed: 2011-11-10].

Glaser, Barney G. (1998) *Doing Grounded Theory. Issues and Discussions.* Mill Valley, Ca.: Sociology Press. [online] Available at http://www.groundedtheory.com/soc13.html [Accessed: 2011-10-27].

Gutierrez, Laurent Gutierrez and Portefaix, Valérie (2003) Pearl River Delta: Lean Planning, Thin Patterns. *Urban Flashes Asia. Architectural Design* 73 (5) September/October 2003. Great Britain/Sussex: Wiley-Academy.

Gøttske, Martin. (2011). Kinas smarte underklasse, *Klassekampen*. 2011-01-08, p. 22 and 23.

Hannerz, Ulf (1998) Transnational Research. In: Bernard H.R (eds.), *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology.* London and New Delhi: Altamira Press, pp. 235-256.

Hansen, Mette and Halskov, Thøgesen, Stig (2008) *Kina-individ og samfunn.* Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Hao, Pu. Sliuzas, Richard and Geertman, Stan (2010) The development and redevelopment of urban villages in Shenzhen. *Habitat International*, April 2010, pp. 1-11.

Hartigan, Erin (2007) *If you love Kuala Lumpur visit Shenzhen,* Washington Post [online] Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/artsandliving/travel/features/2007/places-you-should-go/asia_shenzhen.html [Accessed: 2011-03-08].

He, Shenjing, Liu, Yuting, Webster, Chris. J. and Wu, Fulong (2008) Poverty incidence and concentration in different social groups in urban China, a case study of Nanjing. *Cities*, 25 (3), pp. 121–132.

He, Shenjing, Liu, Yuting, Webster, Chris J. and Wu, Fulong (2009) Property rights distribution, entitlement failure and the impoverishment of landless farmers in China, *Urban Studies*, 46 (9), pp. 1925-1949.

Hong Kong Trade Development Council (2009) *Profiles of Hong Kong Major Manufacturing Industries,* [online] 2009-02-09, Available at: http://info.hktdc.com/main/industries/t2_2_29.htm [Accessed: 2011-03-15].

Hou. Hanru, *San Yuan Li* [online] Available at: http://www.alternativearchive.com/en/archives/sanyuanli-introductionhouhanru.html [Accessed: 2009-05-04].

Huang, Philip C.C. (2009) China's Neglected Informal Economy: Reality and Theory. *Modern China,* 35 (4), pp. 405-438.

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Internal Migration and the Floating Population*, [online], available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a83c1c.html [accessed 2006-02-21]

Jin, Huikang (2003) Tianhe District, *Guangdong News* [online], Source: South CN, Available at: http://www.newsgd.com/citiesandtowns/guangzhou/info/200309170115.htm [Accessed: 2011-03-01]

Jacka, Tamara (2006) *Rural Women in Urban China. Gender, Migration, and Social Change.* New York, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe.

Jacobs, Jane, 1961 (my edition 1992) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* New York: Vintage Books/ Random House Inc.

Karlström, Lennart (1990) *Thomas Tranströmer, en bibliografi.* Västerås Kulturnemds Skriftserie nr. 21.

Kaiser, Lise (eds.) (1999) *Statements for Cities on the Move* 4. 1999, Louisiana Museum for Modern Art., Denmark.

Kelbaugh, Douglas (2005) In: Mehrotra, *Everyday Urbanism. Margaret Crawford vs. Michael Speaks*. Preface. New York: Distributed Arts Press,

Kochan, Dror (2009) Visual Representation of Internal Migration and Social Change in China. *China Information*, 23, pp. 285-316.

La Franiere, Sharon (2009) *China puts Joblessness for Migrants at 20 million.* New York Post, [online], Available at: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/03/world/asia/03china.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper [Accessed: 05.05.09].

Last train home (2009) Film. Directed by Lixin Fan. Montreal: EyeSteelFilm. Original title: Guitu Lieche.

Lefebvre, Henri (1974) *The Production of Space.* Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith 1991, (imprinted 2008). Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Leow, Sean (2008) *Warrior: The story of China's first hip sneaker,* PSFK, [online] Available at:
http://www.psfk.com/2008/06/warrior-the-story-of-chinas-first-hip-sneaker.html
[Accessed: 2010-04-14].

Li, Kwok-sing (eds.) (1995) *A glossary of Political Terms of the Peoples Republic of China.* Hong Kong: China University Press.

Li, Zhigang (2011) A comparative study of migrant villages in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, *2nd International Conference on China's Urban Transition and City Planning*, Cardiff, Wales, 2011-05-27/28.

Li, Qian (2011) Guangzhou tightens migrants' permit checks. *Global Times*, 2011-06-09

Liang, Zai and Ma, Zhongdong (2004) China's Floating Population: New Evidence from the 2000 Census. *Population and Development Review,* 30 (3), pp. 467-488.

Lin, Yanliu (2011) *"Village in the City" in Guangzhou, China. Explorative Research of a Planning Approach (*PhD), Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

Lin, Yanliu, de Meulder, Bruno and Wang, Shifu. (2011) Understanding the 'Village in the City' in Guangzhou: Economic Integration and Development issue and their Implications for the Urban Migrant. *Urban Studies,* [online] 2011-03-10, Available at: http://usj.sagepub.com/content/early/2011/03/10/0042098010396239 [Accessed: 2011.03.24].

Liu, Linlin (2009) The Political Impact of Unequal Education of Floating population in Urban China. *Annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA*, 2008-01-09.

Liu, Yuting, He, Shenjing, Wu, Fulong and Webster, Chris (2010) Urban villages under China's rapid urbanization: Unregulated assets and transitional neighbourhoods. *Habitat International,* 34, pp.135-144.

Liu, Yuting and Wu, Fulong (2006) Urban poverty neighbourhoods: typology and spatial concentration under China's market transition: a case study of Nanjing, *Geoforum*, 37 (4), pp. 610-626.

Liu, Yuyang and Zhi, Wenjun (2008) Post Event Cities. Architectural Design. Special Issue: *New Urban China*. 78 (5), pp. 60-63.

Lönnqvist, Andreas and Rolander, Niclas. (2008) *Hur skor vi oss?* rapport #5 Rena kläder.

Lozanovska, Mirjana (2010) House Dwelling in the Flows of Migration, In: *European Science Foundation conference "Home, Migration and the City: New Narratives, New Methodologies"* Lindköping, Sweden, 2010-08-08.

Mehrotra, Rahul (2010) *Kinetic city: designing for informality in Mumbai*, [online] 2010-05-18, London School of Economics, Film of speech available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olf7XmuqTKE&feature=related [Accessed: 2011-01-25]

Mehrotra, Rahul (eds.) (2005) *Everyday Urbanism. Margaret Crawford vs. Michael Speaks.* Michigan Debates on Urbanism volume 1. Series Editor: Douglas Kelbaugh. Published by The University of Michigan. New York: Distributed Arts Press.

Miranda (eds.) (2009) *Guangzhou Chenghuang Temple to be restored*. [online] Available at:
http://www.newsgd.com/pictures/scenery/content/2009-12/08 content_6905481.htm [Accessed: 2010-03-03].

Müller, Herta, 1993 (my edition 1999) *The Land of Green Plums.* London: Granta Publications.

My Grandmother Beijing (2008) [film, animated] Directed by Mats Grorud. Nubbsjangs Productions.

NASA. Goddard Earth Sciences, Data and Information Service Center: *HSI (PEARL) RIVER DELTA, SOUTH CHINA, [online]* Geomorphology from Space. Chapter 5: Plate D-6 Available at: http://disc.sci.gsfc.nasa.gov/geomorphology/GEO_5/GEO_PLATE_D-6.shtm. [Accessed: 2011-02-03].

National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2011. *Communiqué of the National Bureau of Statistics of People's Republic of China on Major Figures of the 2010 Population Census [1]* (No. 1), [0nline] Available at:
http://stats.gov.cn/english/newsandcomingevents/t20110428_402722244.htm [Accessed: 2011-11-03]

Newsgd (2008) *Guangzhou City. The 16th Asian Games.* SZNEWS [online], Available at: http://www.sznews.com/news/content/2008-04/09/content_1963662_3.htm [Accessed: 2011-03-03].

New World Encyclopedia, [online] Available at:
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Post-structuralism [Accessed: 2011-06-24].

OECD (2009) *Urban Trends and Policy in China*, OECD Regional Development Working Papers, 2009/1, Kamal-Chaoui, L., E. Leman and Z. Rufei, Available at: http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/28/21/42607972.pdf

Obrist, Hans Ulrich (2011) *Ai Weiwei Speaks with Hans Ulrich Obrist.* London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Pun, Ngai, (2005) *Made in China. Women factory workers in a global workplace,* (imprinted 2006). Durham: Duke University Press.

Poon, Shuk-wah (2008) Religion, Modernity, and Urban Space: The City God Temple in Republican Guangzhou. *Modern China,* 34 (2), pp. 247-275.

Qiu, Quanlin (2010) *Guangzhou set to rise from its rubble.* China Daily, [online], Available at:
> http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-08/14/content_11153169.htm
[Accessed: 2011-02-25].

Qiu, Quanlin (2009). *Guangzhou to ensure better air quality for Asian Games*. China Daily, [online] Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2009-07/13/content_8418627.htm [Accessed: 2011-02-04].

Read, Jason (2010). Simon Choat. Marx through Post-Structuralism: Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze (London, New York: Continuum, 2010). *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, Available at: http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/24534-marx-through-post-structuralism-lyotard-derrida-foucault-deleuze/ [Accessed: 2011-11-02].

RNCOS (2010) *China Footwear Market Analysis 2010*, [online] Available at: http://www.reportlinker.com/p089506/China-Footwear-Market-Analysis.html   [Accessed: 2010-11-30].

Rose, Gillian (2001) *Visual Methodologies: An introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

San Yuan Li (2003) [film] Directed by Ou Ning and Cao Fei. China. Distributed by dGenerateFilms.

Sandercock, Leonie (2003) *Cosmopolis II, Mongrel cities in the 21st century*. London: Continuum.

Saunders, Doug (2010) *Arrival City. How the largest migration in history is shaping our world.* London: William Heinemann.

Sennett, Richard (2008) *The Craftsman,* (my edition 2009). London: Penguin Books.

Serres, Michel (2009) *The Hard and the Soft*, [online] Talk given at the Centre for Modern Studies, University of York, 2009-11-26, Available at: http://www.stevenconnor.com/hardsoft/ [Accessed: 2011-06-11].

Serres, Michel (1980) *The Parasite.* Translated by Lawrence R. Schehr, 1982. (my edition 2007). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Sida (2004) *The informal economy*, Fact finding study by Kristina Flodman Becker, [online] Available at: http://rru.worldbank.org/Documents/PapersLinks/Sida.pdf [Accessed: 2010-01-27].

Siu, Helen F. (1990) Recycling Tradition. Culture, History, and Political Economy in the Chrysantemum Festivals of South China. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32 (4), pp. 765-794.

Siu, Helen F. (2007) Grounding displacement: Uncivil urban spaces in post-reform South China. *American Ethnologist*, 34 (2), pp. 329-350.

Siu, Helen F. (2005) Remaking the Rural-Urban Divide in Post-Reform South China: Modernity and Marginality. Conference presentation; "China at a crossroad: Searching for a Balanced Approach to Development", Harvard Law School, November 5-6, 2005, [online] Available at: http://uschinalawsociety.org/symposium/papers/postconference/pdf/Helen.Siu.eng.pdf [Accessed: 2011-02-28].

Skyscraper Source Media. Guangzhou Book Selling Center. [online] Available at: http://skyscraperpage.com/cities/?buildingID=37918 [Accessed: 2011-02-25].

Song, Yan, Zenou, Yves, & Ding, Chenri (2008). Let's not throw the baby out with the bath water: the role of urban villages in housing rural migrants in China. *Urban Studies*, 45 (2), pp. 313-330.

Stones, Michael J. (2007) The Other Migrant Mother. Open Photography Forums. [online] Available at: http:openphotographyforums.com/art_MICHAEL_STONES_001.php [Accessed: 2009-12-04].

Strawson, Galen (2004) Against Narrativity? *Ratio* XVII, 2004-12-04, 34 (6), pp. 428-452.

Tao, Ren (2010) *Pricey property keeps skills away.* China Daily, [online] Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2010-06/17/content_9982724.htm [Accessed: 2011-03-15].

Taylor, Nicholas (1973) *The village in the city*. London: Temple Smith.

Tianhe district document department annual books for 2003, 2005

Tillmanns, Wolfgang (2003) *If one thing matters, everything matters*. Art exibition at Tate Britain, London

Times Museum in Guangzhou, webpage, [online] Available at: http://timesmuseum.ouryou.net/home [Accessed: 2011-10-15].

Tranströmer, Thomas (1966). *Klanger och spår*. Stockholm: Bonnier.

Tsin, Michael Tsang-Woon (1999) *Nation, Governance and Modernity in China. Canton 1900-1927.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Turner. Victor W. (1967) Betwixt and between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage.* In: Turner, V.W., *Forest of Symbols*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press. Ch. 4.

UNESCO's Glossary on Migration, [online] Available at:

www.unesco.org/shs/migration/glossary [Accessed: 2011-01-22].

UN Habitat, 2010. *Better City, Better Life, The State Of China's Cities 2010/2011*, [online] Available at:
http://www.preventionweb.net/english/professional/publications/v.
php?id=16740 [Accessed: 2011-01-13].

Vazzano, Francesca (2008). *Cheng zhong Cun, I "villagi nella citta"*, a Guangzhou. Ph.D. Università degli Studi di Ferrara, [online] Available at: http://eprints.unife.it/151/1/tesi_dottorato-francesco_vazzano.pdf [Accessed: 2009-09-13].

Wang, Fei-Ling (2004) Reformed migration control and new targeted people: China's hukou system in the 2000s. *The China Quarterly,* 177, pp. 115-132.

Wang Huangzheng (2005) Preface in: *BEYOND: an extraordinary space of experimentation of modernization*, [Exhibition catalogue] The Second Guangzhou Triennial, 2005.

Whitehead, J. (2009) 'How do I Influence the Generation of Living Educational Theories for Personal and Social Accountability in Improving Practice? Using a Living Theory Methodology in Improving Educational Practice', In: Tidwell, D, L., Heston, M. L. & Fitzgerald, L. M., (Eds.), *Research Methods for the Self-Study of Practice*. Chicago: Springer, pp. 173-194.

Wise, Amanda (2011) 'You wouldn't know what's in there would you? Homeliness and 'Foreign' Signs in Ashifield, Sidney' In: Brickell and Datta, *Translocal Geographies. Spaces, Places, Connections.* Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Wu, Fulong, Xu, Jiang, Yeh, Anthony G.O. (2007) *Urban development in post-reform China: state, market, and space*. London: Routledge.

Xie, Yue (2010) *Speed up reform of household registration, say newspapers.* China Daily [online] Available at:
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-03/02/content_9522102.htm [Accessed: 2011-11-27].

Xinhua News Agency (2011). *Poly Real Estate reports 40% profit surge*, China Daily, [online], Available at:
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2011-03/02/content_12100219.htm [Accessed: 2011-03-04].

Xinhua News Agency (2010) *China to reform household registration system: Wen*. China Daily, [online] Available at:
    http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2010-02/27/content_9514031.htm
    [Accessed: 2011-11-27].

Xinhua News Agency (2009). *China to turn Pearl River Delta into 'technological innovation lab'.* China Daily [online] Available at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/ bizchina/2009-01/08/content_7379564.htm [Accessed: 2011-02-22].

Xinhua News Agency (2008) *China's populous Guangdong sees baby boom*,
    [online], Available at:
     http://en.chinagate.cn/news/2008-10/16/content_16621274.htm
    [Accessed: 2009- 10-13]

Xiong, Tong (2010) *Guangzhou Asian Games, Asian Para Games to cost over 18 bln. USD,*
    Xinhua, [online], Available at:
        http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/sports/2010-10/13/c_13555761.htm
    [Accessed: 2011-11-02].

Yan, (eds.) (2008) *Reconstruction of "village-in-the-city" brought into urban planning*,
    Newsgd.com, [online] Available at:
    http://www.newsgd.com/news/guangdong1/content/2008-01/28/
    content_4316879.htm [Accessed: 2008-11-07].

Yang, Dennis and Cai, Fang (2003) 'The Political Economy of China's Rural-Urban Divide.'
    In: Hope, Nick, Yang, Dennis and Yang, Mu, eds., 2003. *How Far Across the River? Chinese Policy Reform at the Millennium.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 389-416.

Yao, Yang (2009) *Ending long history of hukou*. China Daily [online] (p. 8)
    Available at:
    http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2009-12/16/content_9184254.htm
    [Accessed: 2011-11-27].

Yeh, Anthony Gar-on and Li, Xia (2000) 'The need for compact Development in the fast-growing Areas of China: The Pearl River Delta' pp.73-91. In: Jenks, Mike and Burgess, Rod, *Compact cities: Sustainable Urban Forms for Developing Countries. London:* Spoon Press.

Yu, Verna (2010) *Guangzhou slum residents battle police Tear gas used on protesters in urban village facing demolition ahead of Asian Games*. South China Morning Post, [online] Available at: http://www.hkhkhk.com/engpro/messages/2798.html [Accessed: 03.03.2011].

Zhang, Li, Zhao, Simon. X.B. and Tian, J. P. (2003) Self-help in housing and Chengzhongcun in China's urbanization, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27 (4), pp. 912-937.

Zhang, Li. 2001 (imprinted 2004) *Strangers in the city. Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks within China's Floating Population*, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Zhang, Xinmin, 1990-2000. *Encircling the cities – long travel of the Chinese Farmers in the cities*, [photographs]. Presented in 2005 Guangzhou Photo Biennial, Guangdong Museum of Art.

Zhao, Yanjing and Webster, Chris (2011) Land Dispossession and Enrichment in China's Suburban Villages, *Urban Studies*, 48 (3), pp. 529-551.

Zheng, Caixiong (2010) *Asiad effect: Barbeque stalls banned*, China Daily, [online] Available at:
http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-10/26/content_11456602.htm
[Accessed: 2011-11-18].

Zhu Yanshan and Stephen Roach (2009) *Panyu's Clifford Suburb Home to many Foreign Food Stores*, *Life of Guangzhou*, [online], Available at: http://www.lifeofguangzhou.com/node_10/node_35/node_152/node_377/2009/05/21/124288769264755.shtml [Accessed: 2011-03-03].

VIII   LIST OF TALKS AND INTERVIEWS

2007-07-11   Residents, migrant shared apartment, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Gong Cheng

2007-07-11   Migrant Workers' Documentation Center, translator, Gong Cheng

2007-07-12   Presentation of rural village protection scheme, Nan Cun, Nanling

2007-07-15   Participant meeting, *Photo Documentation Project*: Weng Xuan

2007-07-17   Mrs Ye Hong; female planner working on urban village planning scheme, South China University of Science and Technology

2007-07-17   An Ge on migrant photography, translator, Dixie

2007-07-18   Staff at Unihouse, Tangxia Cun, translator, Mr Wu

2007-07-20   Staff at Migrant Workers' Documentation Center, translator, Weng Xuan

2007-07-20   Residents of *House Rent Project*, translator, Dixie

2008-11-14   Young woman running telephone shop in main street, Xian Cun, translator, Li Hong and Han Meng Jie

2008-11-14   A Aan, a young local villager, student and hairdresser, Xian Cun, translator, Li Hong and Han Meng Jie

2008-11-14   Xian Chun Qu, a native old man at the elder's community centre, Xian Cun, translator, Li Hong and Han Meng Jie (J)

2008-11-21   Mrs Wang, a self-employed bicycle guard, Xian Cun, translator, Chan Yiran

2008-11-21   Migrant man washing clothes at the fire pump outside Xian Cun, translator, Chan Yiran

2008-11-23   Migrant friends having a picnic in a park, Panyu, translator, Ms Chen

2008-11-23   Extended interview with Liu Xiang, young man working in chandelier factory (about to lose his job), Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2008-11-23   Residents of *House Rent Project*, translator, Ms Chen

2008-11-25   Woman working in the public toilet outside Xian Cun, translator, Liu Jayuan

2008-11-25   Zhu Bin, a man working in a bicycle shop in Jin Sui Lu, Xian Cun, translator, Liu Jayuan

2008-11-25   Mr Zeng, man running a billboard factory in Jin Sui Lu, Xian Cun, including talk with his wife and brother, translator, Liu Jayuan

2008-11-27   Second interview and stroll around the village with Mrs Wang, a self-employed bicycle guard, Xian Cun, translator, Lin Ying Hao

2008-11-27   Xiao Meizhou, shoe sole seller and mother taking care of her child, Xian Cun, translator, Lin Ying Hao

2008-11-27   Two old local villager ladies, 73 and 78 years old, Xian Cun, translator, Lin Ying Hao

2008-11-28   Woman running a clothes shop in the new market, living outside the village, Xian Cun, Translators: Peng Weiqing and Weng Xuan

2008-11-28   Ms Wang, a vegetable seller and employed bicycle guard, Xian Cun, Translator: Peng Weiqing

2008-11-28   Security deputy in the village government building, Xian Cun, Translator: Peng Weiqing

2008-12-04   Two women collecting cardboard and plastic in old main street, Xian Cun, translator, Wang Xi

2008-12-04   Counter staff at Guangzhou, Tienhe district, Xian Cun street, renting house management service center, Translators: Wang Xi

2008-12-05   Book seller/book renter, old main street, Xian Cun, Translator: Gong Cheng

2008-12-05   Seamstress and hairdresser, old migrant couple, living for ten years in Xian Cun, translator, Gong Cheng

2008-12-05   Restaurant owner, Xian Cun, translator, Gong Cheng

2008-12-07   Kuang A Lan, a woman from Hunan, cleaner, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2008-12-07   Young residents in old house, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2008-12-07   House developer in Shigangxi Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2008-12-07   Women embroidering soles in Shigangxi Cun, translator, Mr Chen

2008-12-17   Deputy of Guangzhou, Tienhe district, Xian Cun street, renting house management service center, translator, Chan Yiran

2008-12-17   Shop owner at the new food market, translator, Chan Yiran

2008-12-17   Three wagon bike delivery men outside Xian Cun, translator, Chan Yiran

2008-12-17   Seamstress in her stairway studio, old main street, Xian Cun, translator, Chan Yiran

2008-12-18   Woman selling corn in crossing outside Xian Cun, translator, Deng Li Ying

2008-12-18   Three men collecting paper, one from Liede in Xian Cun, translator, Deng Li Ying

2008-12-18   Man (2) washing clothes by the fire pump outside Xian Cun, translator, Deng Li Ying

2008-12-18   Woman buying vegetables in Xian Cun, translator, Deng Li Ying

2008-12-18   Man selling raisins outside Xian Cun, translator, Deng Li Ying

2008-12-18   Man working on metro construction site, living in barracks, visiting Xian Cun, translator, Deng Li Ying

2008-12-19   Ten construction workers in the new residential areas south of Xian Cun, translator, Peng Weiqing

2008-12-19   Couple running water-bottle shop in Jin Sui Lu, Xian Cun, translator, Peng Weiqing

2008-12-19   Talk with migrant couple in sideroad apartment, translator, Peng Weiqing

2009-11-17   Two paper collectors in backstreet of CBD, translator, Ms Chen

2009-11-17   Woman paper collector in financial district, translator, Ms Chen

2009-11-17   Man selling sweet potatoes in financial district, translator, Ms Chen

2009-11-17   Woman selling elastic bands and arm protectors in front of international school, translator, Ms Chen

2009-11-18	Female cleaner in hotel in CBD, translator, Ms Chen
2009-11-18	Male receptionist in hotel in CBD, resident in Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2009-11-18	Old men in Xian Cun, anonymous translator
2009-11-18	Paper collectors in Xian Cun, anonymous translator
2009-11-19	Construction site supervisor south of Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2009-11-19	Two women collecting cardboard and plastic in Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2009-11-19	Female resident in curving, old main street, Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2009-11-20	Jiajun and other residents of House Rent Project, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2009-11-20	Initiators of kindergarten for migrant children, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2010-09-24	Two city girls in Han dynasty dresses, photo shooting in Xiaozhou Cun, translator, Mrs Chen
2010-09-24	Male artist living in Xiaozhou Cun, translator, Mrs Chen
2010-09-24	Russian tourist in Xiaozhou Cun, translator, Mrs Chen
2010-09-24	Local villager student home for the weekend, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen
2010-09-25	Jiajun and other residents of *House Rent Project*, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2010-09-25	Initiators of Migrant Mother Center in Jiu Shui Keng, translator, Ms Chen
2010-09-25	Daily leader of branches of Migrant Workers' Documentation Center, Panyu, translator, Ms Chen
2010-09-25	Daily leader of Migrant Children Center in Xinqiao Cun, translator, Ms Chen
2010-09-26	Local villagers outside the village administration, Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2010-09-26   Shopkeeper in Lan Qing, new main shopping street, Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2010-09-26   Signboard workshop owner in Jin Sui Lu, south end street, Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2010-09-26   Local villagers in family Lu's ancestral temple, Xian Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-11   Artist and artist's wife in Xiaozhou Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Architect/café and bed and breakfast owner in Xiaozhou Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Plot owner/house construction worker in Beiting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Woman running brush shop, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Takeaway kitchen staff, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Couple running restaurant in small house, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Newly arrived family running a restaurant, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Talk with couple running restaurant and using new extension for storage, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-11   Students using extension as studio, Nanting Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-13   Migrant carpenter, Enning Lu area, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-13   Talk with local residents, old house, Enning Lu area, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-13   Migrant resident, old house, Enning Lu area, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-13   Local family, old house, Enning Lu area, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-13   Old local lady, old house, Enning Lu area, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-13   Local woman in her home in Enning Lu, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-15   Jiajun, her mother, husband and daughter, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-15   Migrant family with two children in new house, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-15   Talk to migrants in old farmer's house, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-15   Young migrant family living in Jiajun's former house, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-15   Migrant grandparents in former House Rent Project house, Shigangxi Cun, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-15   Migrant Workers Documentation Center leader and Migrant Mother Project leader, translator, Ms Chen

2011-10-16   Fruit seller in temporary market, Xian Cun, anonymous translator

2011-10-16   Shop owner in old main street, Xian Cun, anonymous translator

2011-10-16   Old man in elderly center, Xian Cun, anonymous translator

2011-10-16   Representatives of local villager movement, Xian Cun, anonymous translator

2011-10-18   Two ladies in patio house, Shipai Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-18   Old local ladies by the temple, Shipai Cun, translator, Mrs Chen J

2011-10-18   Man showing us old street stones, Shipai Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

2011-10-18   Men working in parking lot at former lake, Shipai Cun, translator, Mrs Chen

342